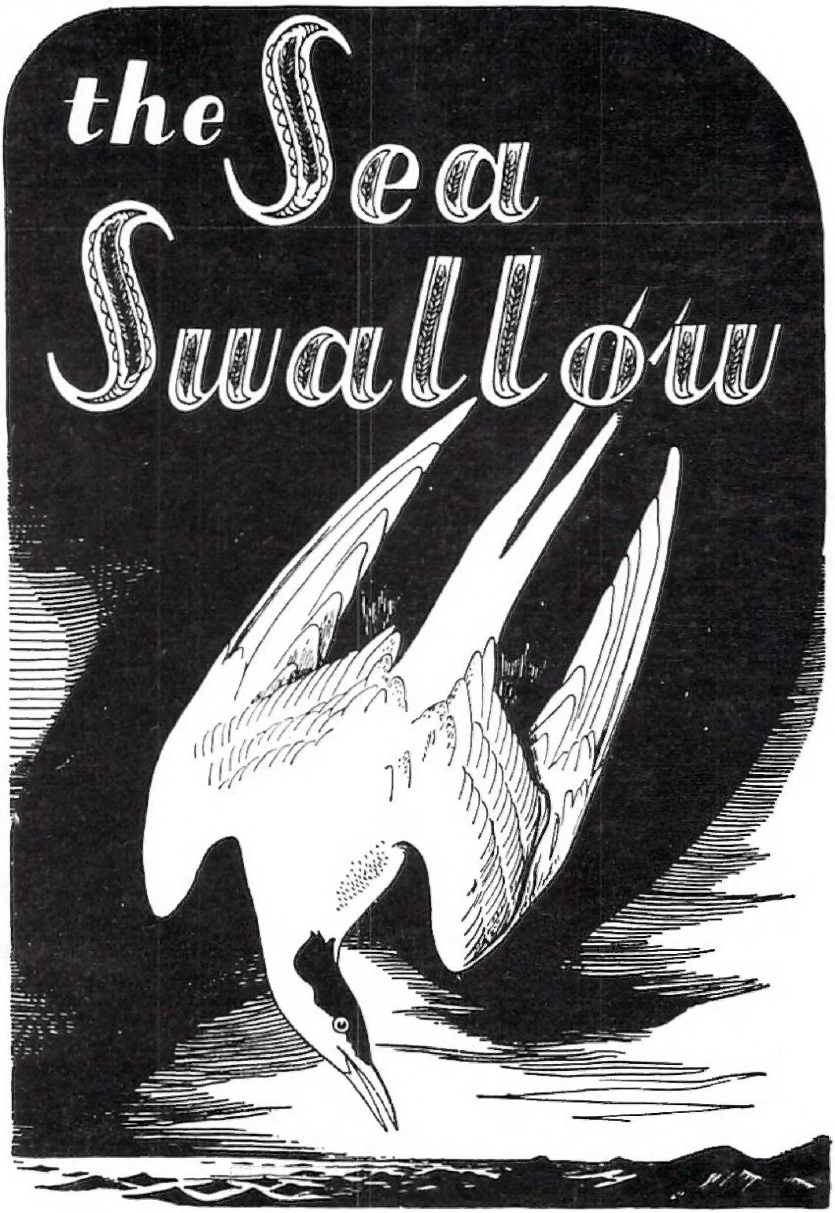
VOL. 36 PRICE £4

the Sea Swallow



BEING THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL NAVAL BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

PUBLISHED 1987

ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY

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Membership has been widened from the R.N. to include all those who share a common background — the sea itself — regardless of nationality.*

Aims and activities. The primary aim of the Society is to promote a forum for the exchange of information on seabirds, and of landbirds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare-time recreation and hobby. The secondary aim is to co-ordinate the efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods so that observations can be of value to the professional ornithologist ashore.

R.N.B.W.S. Record Forms. Standardised forms for recording Seabirds and Landbirds at sea, Seabird Census sheets, Bird examined in the Hand (BEH) forms have been designed for use at sea. Stocks are kept by Warrant Officer C. A. R. Bailey, 8 Grange Close, Gosport, Hants. PO12 3DX. Please give detailed requirements and enclose a large stamped and addressed envelope.

Completed record forms should be sent to Stephen Chapman (seabirds) and the Chairman (landbirds).

Material for publication in *Sea Swallow* should be sent to the Editor (see instructions to authors inside back cover).

*An application form for membership is at the back of this edition of *Sea Swallow*.

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Dinwiddie Grieve Limited, Dumfries

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* aboard H.M.S. *Opportune*
in mid-South Atlantic, March 1985
Photo: Leading Seaman D. C. Martin, R.N.
Winner of *Sea Swallow* Photographic Prize 1986

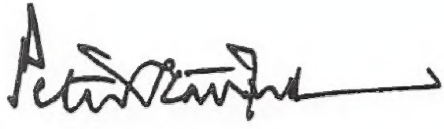
FOREWORD

Here is another volume sprinkled with the names of numerous observers and strange birds, but where has the Royal Navy been this year?

It is a sad reflection on the response from H.M. Ships to recent opportunities — GLOBAL '86, regular deployments of two or three hundred people to and from the South Atlantic, and the Gulf — that the hobby of watching birds at sea, which is our Society's primary aim to support, is apparently so rare. Seafaring people have for centuries amused themselves during lengthy voyages with pastimes they would not necessarily pursue ashore: everything from ships in bottles to painting-by-numbers. It is disappointing therefore that, despite much effort and encouragement, with the growth of knowledge of birds at sea and the chance of contributing to it, R.N. interest has been so sparse in recent years. I am sure that a small number of bird enthusiasts are still to be found in most ships, but why do they not make themselves known and join in this team venture? And this is especially sad when, as these pages show, there is so much healthy interest and support from our colleagues in the Merchant Fleets.

Perhaps we have an image problem: does the shaggy, gum-booted "twitcher" of popular imagination, crowned with woolly balaclava, and all slung about with binoculars and telescope, camera and tripod, come too easily to the minds of today's intelligent, lively seagoers? We ought to be able to deal with that.

The Society exists to help. We must work out ways of doing better, but we cannot just leave things to our older members now ashore. Ideas and actions must come from those at sea. We look forward to hearing from you.



EDITORIAL

This edition is again the result of much hard work by numerous observers, including several new names, and covers a wide variety of sea areas. Sadly missing this year is the annual seabird report extracted from Meteorological Logs contributed in past years by Captain A. S. (Tony) Young; he has recently had to give up this arduous task on account of ill-health, but I am very pleased and grateful to Captain P. W. G. (Peter) Chilman who has kindly agreed to take it on. His report will appear next year.

I wish our budget could stretch to include more of them, but as will be seen from some of the results shown here, the 1986 *SEA SWALLOW* Photographic Competition was a resounding success. Entries are continuing to arrive for this year's competition and results will be announced at the A.G.M. on 4 December.

I would also like to draw attention to the order form on page 75 for the *SEA SWALLOW Index*. This lists, by species and author, the reports of everything seen and published in this journal over the last 34 years and will be an extremely valuable reference to amateurs and serious birdwatchers alike. I am very grateful to Captain J. A. F. Jenkins for undertaking this major task, in conjunction with the Australian Seabird Group on behalf of, and at no cost to R.N.B.W.S. I commend all members to show their gratitude by ordering a copy without delay.

I hope readers will agree that this edition is well up to standard and full of interest; I am, however, never satisfied. I would like to see more from our younger members, and I am concerned that the standard of excellence of some of the major articles, and the use of Latin names etc., may put off some of our less experienced observers from contributing to these pages. This should not be so, and I am anxious to promote greater participation by including more "Short Notes". My aim for *SEA SWALLOW* is that it should more accurately reflect the activities of our membership at sea throughout the world's oceans. This is **your** magazine, but I can only include what is sent to me. If you have something of interest to say, do please put pen to paper and write to me in good time.

MICHAEL CASEMENT

BIRDS OF BRABANT ISLAND, ANTARCTICA

By Commander Chris Furse, Royal Navy

The Antarctic Peninsula points like a long narrow finger from the continent of Antarctica up toward South America. Off the northern tip of the Peninsula lies an arc of islands, the South Shetlands, separated from Cape Horn by 500 miles of the roughest seas in the world. Here the currents that are driven around and around by the southern oceans by the big westerly winds of the Forties and Fifties are compressed, passing through the comparatively narrow gap of Drake Passage, and over the Shackleton Shelf that runs like a bar from Cape Horn to Elephant Island. The depression systems and winds are also constricted through this gap, and the South Shetlands and the West Coast of the Antarctic Peninsula are notorious for some of the most unpleasant weather in the world.

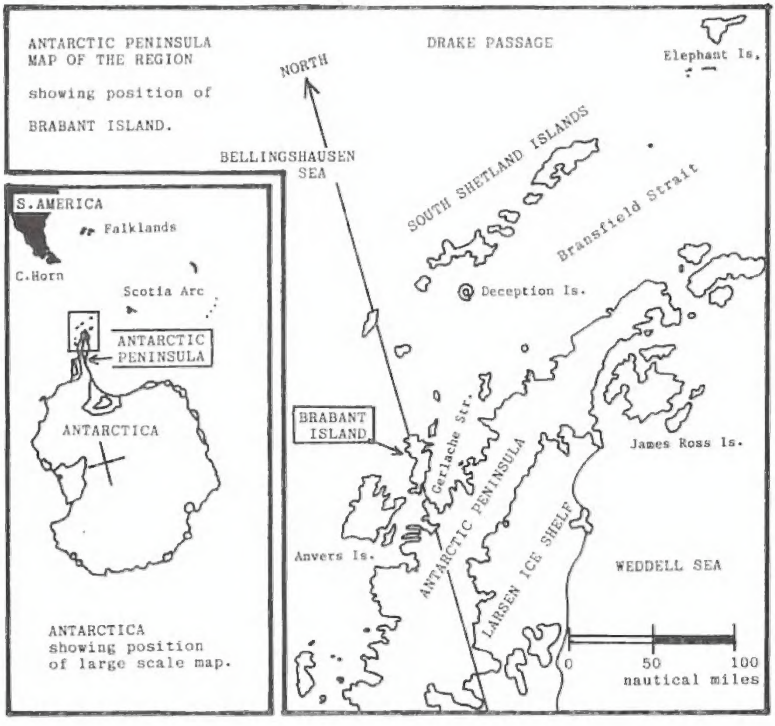


Fig. 1.

Brabant Island lies off the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula at 64°S (see map Fig. 1). Its 8,500ft summit is just visible from the southern end of the South Shetland Islands, on those days when the weather breaks to give glorious crystal clear visibility of about 150 miles. The island is about 40 miles long and up to 20 wide, entirely mountainous and heavily glaciated. It is the second largest island of the Palmer Archipelago, thought to be part of the Peninsula itself until 1898 when De Gerlache discovered the lovely strait which now bears his name. Since 1898 there had been only five recorded landings on Brabant Island (and two unrecorded), and no-one had camped there overnight since De Gerlache and Amundsen's party 86 years before us. Ships pass by each summer on the way to or from five bases further south, but the island's extremely rugged terrain had discouraged exploration. Its west coast is precipitous, with cliffs rising to the ridge which runs for most of the island's length at between 6,000 and 8,500ft; subsidiary mountain ranges reach out to points on the east coast, separated by glaciers ending in unstable ice-cliffs. Very few landing sites were known, and indeed we found only 11 around the whole island. The terrain was notorious, even in that wild region; while the height and topography would clearly exaggerate the ferocity of the prevailing high winds. So although many people had seen the island, and a map had been produced from aeriel photography, very little was known about it. The British Antarctic Survey could not spare the time that would be needed to cover the island on the ground, and with only a few small patches of snowfree ground they did not expect much to be found there. Altogether it seemed a good place for a Joint Services Expedition.

The rough oceans around Antarctica are rich in nutrients, phytoplankton, and zooplankton, notably krill. Seals and seabirds (and whales) have evolved to exploit this ocean larder, many living all year round in the fringes of the pack-ice. Ross, Crabeater, Weddell and Leopard Seals (and Emperor Penguins) have each evolved specialist strategies to spend their entire lives at sea, breeding on the sea-ice. However the other birds must all come ashore to breed in the brief antarctic summer, so the few islands and coastal fringes available are crowded with colonies of breeding seabirds. All vertebrate land animals on Antarctica were wiped out during the ice-ages, and the continent's remoteness has prevented any subsequent colonisation, so that even the flightless penguins are free from unbearable predation in their breeding colonies, which quite often hold millions of pairs.

Our objective on Brabant Island was to find out as much as we could about the island, including what grew and lived there. One major part of our scientific work was a geological survey of the island. Another main study was on human physiology, trying to determine whether man adapted to central cold stimulus. Supporting these two main studies were several data-gathering programmes on botany, terrestrial invertebrates and birds. As well as organising and leading the expedition, my task was the ornithological programme.

I had studied birds on two previous Antarctic expeditions to Elephant Island and its satellites. During those single-summer expeditions we had been able to carry out census work on breeding populations, plus some work on feeding ecology, but the programmes of HMS *Endurance* (landing us in late December and recovering us in March) prevented our witnessing the spring arrivals at the breeding colonies, and the autumn departures. So this time I had planned an expedition lasting 15 months, from December 1983 to March 1985. There were three phases, two 3-month summers, plus the 9-month winter in between. Three teams of 10-17 men took part, with myself and three other individuals each spending a year on the island, overlapping over the winter: altogether 35 men took part. The 12-man winter team were the first party ever to spend a whole winter in Antarctica mobile in tents, rather than withdrawing to a static base-hut. During the course of the expedition we made the first ascents of nearly all the mountains on the island, and some quite remarkable journeys were made in inflatable boats and kayaks.

Just living in that environment was quite an adventure. Temperatures were not extreme, averaging about -2°C at sea level and -18°C at 8,000ft, but windchill effective temperatures dropped to about -80°C on occasions. The winds were incredible, often exceeding hurricane force, and several times destroying our tents. Snowfall was prodigious with 38ft recorded over the winter, and tents were several times totally buried. Luckily no-one was caught in any of the avalanches, which occurred in every month of the year. On the other hand most people fell into crevasses several times, with a dozen potentially serious "headunder" falls. In one of these Lt. Cdr. Clive Waghorn broke his thigh, leading to a dramatic 5-day rescue involving HMS *Endurance*, RFA *Olna* and a Twin Otter aircraft from the British Antarctic Survey. The winter party also nearly ran out of food, with some cached rations swept out to sea in a storm when the barometer fell to 936 millibars, and we had to eke out by eating seals and a few penguins.

However, this article is not about our adventures, but about the birds we studied. Our main ornithological aim was a census of the breeding birds — although there were not very many suitable areas for birds to nest, the census proved interesting and will fill in a blank space on the map. For census work, zero is just as valuable a count as any other figure, and one useful if disappointing finding was the scarcity of petrel species at many apparently suitable sites — in sharp contrast to the densely crowded slopes on Elephant Island, just a few hundred miles northeast of Brabant. Unexpectedly, our winter observations were probably of greater interest, largely because of the position of our main basecamp. Most antarctic bases are sited in sheltered bays with good anchorages for unloading supply ships. Our basecamp was on Metchnikoff Point, jutting out into the Bellingshausen Sea from the northwest corner of Brabant Island, so we had an unusual opportunity to observe pelagic seabirds in winter, as well as those limited to coastal foraging.

The notes below include all the species we hoped to see, and outline the annual cycles of those actually observed on Brabant Island.

King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonica*. Only three or four have ever been recorded in the South Shetlands, and we saw none at Brabant.

Emperor Penguin *A. forsteri*. The northernmost colony is 200 miles south of Brabant. We chose them as our logo, but saw none.

Adelie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*. There are huge colonies north of Brabant in the Scotia Arc, as well as further south, but they breed on flat terrain, and we only saw a few non-breeders in summer.

Chinstrap Penguin *P. antarctica*. This is the typical pygoscelid penguin of the Peninsula region, and Anvers Island at 65°S is the southernmost breeding site. There were only two colonies on Brabant (plus one on offlying Hunt Island, wrongly recorded previously as on Lecointe Island), and two suitable sites were unoccupied. About 5,000 pairs bred at Metchnikoff Point, arriving from 9 October, and leaving the colonies en masse in a blizzard on 26-27 April. Peak hatching occurred over a two week period, the first half of January in 1984, and a week earlier in 1985 (compared to the latter half of December at Elephant Island). A small number roosted onshore in April, dwindling in May, with one straggler on 21 June; two ringed birds probably came from the Wauermann Islands at 65°S.

Gentoo Penguin *P. papua*. These breed south to 65°S, but prefer gentle sites with beaches, so none bred on Brabant Island. Some non-breeders arrived in September, a month before the Chinstraps. In April and May up to 100 roosted on the beach at Metchnikoff Point; four of these had been ringed 150 miles north on King George Island, providing the first indication of a reverse migration in autumn — and also showing that the composition of this roosting flock changed, and thus involved over 100 individuals. Another surprise was seeing two or three each month in winter.

Macaroni Penguin *Eudyptes chrysolophus*. The southernmost colonies of this crested penguin are 110 miles north at Deception Island, and at Brabant Island we saw only a very few non-breeders in summer.

Rockhopper Penguin *E. chrysocome*. This sub-antarctic crested penguin very seldom reaches the Peninsula region, but seems to follow Joint Services Expeditions about. The only antarctic breeding record is one we found near Elephant Island, and just before Christmas one vagrant walked into our basecamp on Brabant Island.

Non-breeding Adelie Penguins
in a Chinstrap colony.
Photo: Tim Hall

Chinstrap Penguins on
Brabant Island
Photo: Ronnie Barker

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. Foraging Wanderers reach the South Shetlands, but we saw none near Brabant Island.

Black-browed Albatross *D. melanophris*. Although they breed much further north, these "Mollyhawks" regularly forage this far south. In summer most boat parties saw a few, and over 100 gathered to feed among inshore skerries in the north-west after one bad storm. Large movements past the north-west capes of Brabant Island in February were probably the concentrated fringe of birds feeding pelagically in the Bellingshausen Sea. (In the 1983/84 season there was a krill-famine around South Georgia, which may have forced more breeding birds to come this far south.)

Grey-headed Albatross *D. chrysostoma*. A few of the "Mollyhawks" seen were uncertainly identified as this species. One was also been by Dr Bill Bourne off Brabant Island on 8 March 1985.

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria palpebrata*. This species, the finest flyer of all albatrosses, forages south of the Antarctic Convergence. We only saw them west of Brabant, from HMS *Endurance*.

Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*. This species breeds further down the Antarctic Peninsula, but none bred on the few suitable sites on Brabant Island. Throughout the year a few foraged inshore, with groups of up to 30 gathering at seal carcasses in the winter months. Very few sub-adults visited, and only in summer.

Cape Pigeon *Daption capense*. Brabant is near the southern fringe of the breeding range. Although present inshore all round the island it was a surprisingly patchy breeder, and only occurred in the north, being absent from suitable sites in the south-west. At the 300 odd nests around basecamp, hatching occurred synchronously between 14-20 January, a week later than the mean at Elephant Island. In March and April, after fledging and the moult, flocks fed among the skerries by day, and pairs returned to roost at their nest sites each night, when their chittering was a cheering sound outside our tents. In May they fed scattered further offshore; movements of up to 744 per hour sometimes coasted past in June, but the number roosting on the cliffs dwindled to none. In July and August very few were seen, but they revisited the cliffs increasingly from the first week of September.

Antarctic Fulmar *Fulmarus glaciatoides*. This species breeds over roughly the same range as the Cape Pigeon but at fewer places, and again Brabant is near its southern limit. They foraged all round the island, and were scarcer than the Cape Pigeon around the north coasts, but surprisingly commoner in the Gerlache Strait in spring. Only a few colonies were found, on some high steep cliffs in the north, and the breeding dates were not established. In early winter a

few were seen among other petrels passing the north-west capes. Although none were seen from mid-July to 5 September, they are pelagic in winter and may have been present offshore. By late September they were already visiting the breeding cliffs.

Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica.* The northernmost known colony of this species is on the Peninsula south of Brabant. Their pelagic range extends to the limits of sea-ice, and they obviously foraged offshore in winter, flying past the northern capes from mid-June onwards, with some movements of over 500 birds per hour. Flocks of 50 sailing high over our glaciers in November were probably about to return to breeding colonies. None were seen from January to May.

Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea.* This species nests all along the Antarctic Peninsula. There was strong evidence of several colonies around the northern coastal cliffs of Brabant, but we did not get conclusive proof of breeding; the small colony near basecamp appeared to be abandoned by mid-January (a month before we saw very few in February and March. In early April pairs began revisiting supposed nest sites, displaying on the ground and in lovely pair-flights; this behaviour continued intermittently throughout the winter until mid-November when the flights were reduced, perhaps because incubation had begun. From April to November, Snow Petrels were common inshore, coasting past the northern capes regularly in small numbers, and feeding whenever there was sea-ice around. Large movements (of up to 1146 per hour) usually coincided with movements of other petrels, and were probably the fringe of widespread pelagic weather movements. Snow Petrels were the only species seen regularly inland, even crossing the top of the island at over 8,000ft.

Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata.* The southernmost known colonies in this region are at Elephant Island, although they forage south into the Bellingshausen Sea. One wing of an Antarctic Prion from a skua territory on Brabant was identified, and two others elsewhere on the island were thought to be this species. We found no other evidence of their presence, but their nocturnal visits make small colonies hard to find, so they may breed here.

Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea.* This species breeds in the subantarctic but numbers forage south of the South Shetlands. One was seen due west of Brabant Island from HMS *Endurance*, and a flock of "whalebirds" inshore in December were either this species or prions.

South Georgian Diving Petrel *Pelecanoides georgicus.* These auk-like subantarctic petrels regularly feed at the Antarctic Convergence. Bill Bourne saw some 60nm NW of Livingstone Island in the South Shetlands on 9 March 1985, while on his way south in RFA *Olna* for the rescue of Clive Waghorn. However, we neither saw nor suspected any at Brabant Island.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. Their circumpolar breeding range extends well down the Antarctic Peninsula, and they nested in most suitable areas on Brabant Island. The first arrived at the end of October, and hatching occurred over the first two weeks of February (a later and more compressed period than at Elephant Island). By mid-April the last chicks had fledged, and only a couple of late stragglers were seen thereafter.

Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*. We had discovered large numbers breeding at Elephant Island, but few (if any) colonies further south were known. They were present at several northern and western sites on Brabant Island, with strong but not conclusive evidence of breeding. In the same season (1983/84) a colony was discovered further south near Anvers Island. The first arrivals noted were in late November, after the Wilson's Storm-petrels; with their longer breeding cycle, they probably fledged late in April, when many chicks would be entombed by autumn snowfalls.

Blue-eyed Shag *Phalacrocorax atriceps*. This species breeds south to about 68°S. Several colonies were scattered around the island both on the exposed west coast and in the Gerlache Strait. In summer they fed locally inshore, singly or in small parties. In winter, from May to November, flocks fed communally further off the northwest coast, returning each evening to communal roosts on inshore stacks. These roosting flocks moved around the coast from month to month, but at least 1662 were present, rather more than the total breeding population on the island, suggesting immigration.

South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*. The South Polar Skua is currently extending its breeding range northward, and has reached the South Orkneys. Brabant Island is in the overlap area where both species breed; most skuas breeding were certainly South Polar, and most others seen were assumed to be, but the two species are very difficult to distinguish at a distance. South Polar Skuas tended to concentrate in particular breeding areas, most at three comparatively well-vegetated points on the west coast where over 200 pairs bred. This species feeds largely on krill, and the large concentrations were not associated with penguins, nor with large colonies of petrels. The first arrivals were in October, and most hatched during the second half of January (rather later and over a shorter period than at Elephant Island). A few lingered on through April, plus two stragglers after that. We learnt that one ringed as a nestling at Palmer Base the year before had been shot in Greenland as a juvenile — a migration rivalling the Arctic Tern's, but less well recognised.

Brown Skua *C. lonnbergi*. This species breeds down to 65°S and possibly even further south. Only a few pairs and individuals were positively identified on Brabant. Some mixed pairs were seen

Mixed pair of Skuas at
basecamp on Brabant Island
Photo: Tim Hall

Blue-eyed Shags with young
Photo: Tim Hall

— in these cases it is usually a female Brown Skua mated with a male South Polar Skua, the latter species arriving two weeks later.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*. This widespread southern gull breeds from Brazil south to about 68°S on the Antarctic Peninsula, and there were numerous small colonies around Brabant Island. Most chicks were hatched in the latter half of December. Southern populations are said to be migratory and at Elephant Island migrant flocks had gathered in March. One large flock of 400 did pass through in mid-June, which may have come from further south, while smaller parties resting on glaciers in November may have been late spring migrants heading further south. However, the inshore seas around the north-west of Brabant Island were never completely covered in pack-ice, and throughout the winter each point was occupied by adults and juveniles closely corresponding to the local breeding groups, and territorial and courtship behaviour was observed as early as July. From late-October to mid-May their main food resource appeared to be limpets which were then available above low-tide, but in winter they frequently fed offshore, sometimes flying out of sight, but more often plunge-diving among brash and small ice-floes, or scavenging near Leopard Seals. Very few older sub-adults were seen apart from yearlings in early summer, but it is now suggested that this species approaches full adult plumage after only two years.

Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata*. This species breeds south to about 68°S on the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula, and small colonies bred at several sites all around Brabant Island. Hatching ranged from late December to early February (compared to mid-December to mid-February at Elephant Island). Most families remained in the area after fledging, unlike at Elephant Island. Flocks passing through in April may have been birds from further south dispersing northward, because we were pleasantly surprised to find adult terns remaining around the north coast throughout the winter in numbers exceeding the local breeding populations. They fed among the brash ice inshore, and also out of sight to seaward; flocks often rested on ice-floes, and roosting flocks gathered on moraines each evening in June. Courtship chases were seen over known nest sites from July onward; pairs occasionally stood in nest territories as early as August, and colonial defence increased through October. One early egg was laid on 9 November but lost to skuas; terns are the only antarctic species to lay second clutches, so late hatchings may have been pairs who moved and re-laid after such early failures.

Arctic Tern *S. paradisaea*. This species reaches the Antarctic in the southern summer, when its winter white forehead distinguishes it from breeding Antarctic Terns. Individuals were identified at Brabant in January, with "possibles" in November and February.

American Sheathbill *Chionis alba*. This species breeds around the Scotia Arc, and down the Antarctic Peninsula to about 65°S. Some pairs bred at the three Chinstrap Penguin colonies around Brabant, and a few at Shag colonies. Flocks arriving at Elephant Island in March were probably southern breeders migrating to South America, and most textbooks state that few Sheathbills remain far south, except where scientific bases provide refuse to eat. Therefore it was surprising to find that the breeding population on Brabant was clearly all resident with no previous human occupation. In April they dispersed from the breeding areas, appearing in twos and threes at other coastal points where none had been in summer. They gathered where shag roosts and seals offered reasonable pickings, but remained highly mobile throughout the winter, arriving out of nowhere when Leopard Seals hauled out on the ice (and even when a skier fell on a glacier), but strangely never visiting our basecamp just 100ft above the beach, until they began to reoccupy the nesting territories in October. One ringed bird was found dead, and two others seen in summer, but these were the only evidence of movements or migration.

Commander J. R. C. Furse, O.B.E., F.R.G.S., Royal Navy, Hegg Hill, Smardon, Near Ashford, Kent TN27 8NX.

King Penguins *Aptenodytes patagonicus*,
South Georgia
*Photo:*Commander A. W. Wainwright, R.N.
(Sea Swallow Photo Competition 1986)

OBSERVATIONS OF BIRDS IN THE PERSIAN GULF JULY - NOVEMBER 1985

By Captain D. M. Simpson, M.N.

The following list of 89 species was recorded from M.V. *Pacific Bear* working on the offshore oil and gas fields, Zuluf and Marjan, which are close adjacent to each other off the coast of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, during the period 14 July-1 November 1985.

Work was centred within a small area in the two fields, and unless otherwise indicated, all birds were observed in an area bounded by the parallels 28°15′N and 28°25′N and meridians 49°15′E and 49°40′E.

Reference points:

A. Zuluf Gas and Oil Separation (GOSP) is at 28°24′N 49°18′E.

B. Marjan Gas and Oil Separation Platform (GOSP 2) is at 28°22′N 49°38′E, i.e. 55nm east of Ras al Mishab and 64nm SW of Kharg Is. (see map Fig. 1).

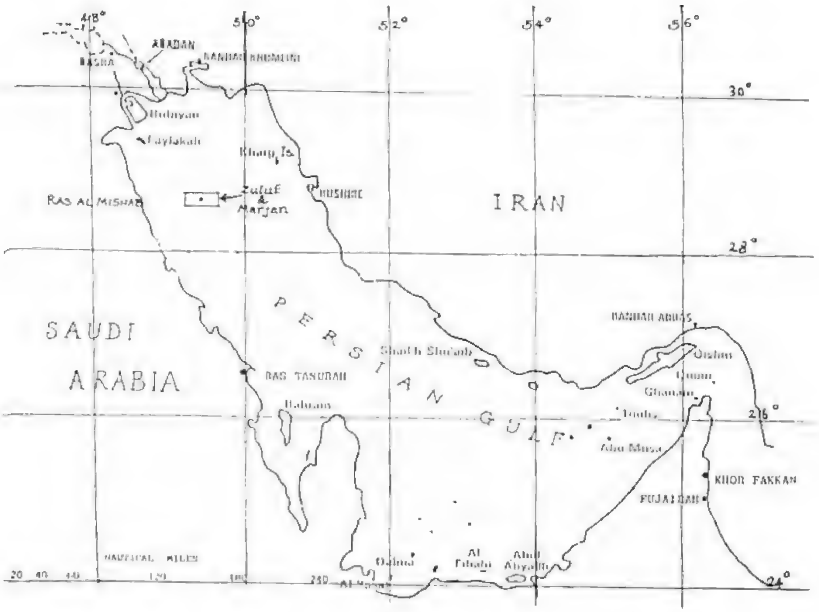


Fig. 1.

The principal observer was myself (DMS), assisted by Chief Engineers A. Carney (AC) and Nigel Drummond (ND). DMS left the vessel on 12 Oct and ND continued observations thereafter. Reference books used were *The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East* by Hermann Heinzel, Richard Fitter and John Parslow (Collins 1972), and *Country Life Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*.

The weather throughout was generally good with occasional "blows" mainly from the NW. Visibility was mostly good but sometimes hazy.

Birds noted are listed in systematic order with the following notations:

* Almost positive: DMS considers it a safe bet, but freely admits he has been wrong before.

(U) Uncertain: The species named bears the closest resemblance.

CHECK-LIST

Shearwater Sp. One possible Cory's *Calonectris diomedea* (U) on 19 Aug and another on 30 Aug. The 'jizz', large size and general colouration strongly indicate Cory's. DMS has been sailing in the Gulf on and off for the last 10 years and these are the only large shearwaters he has recorded inside the Gulf.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. Small flocks were regularly seen throughout the last half of July and August, but none were recorded after 31 Aug.

Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*. Common in small numbers throughout the period.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*. A flight of 12 was seen flying WSW on 30 Sep, 7 Oct (2), and 15 Oct (1).

Purple Heron *A. purpurea*. 29 Aug (1), a flight of 7 flying W on 31 Aug, 6 Sep (2), 7 Sep (4), 8 Sep (4), and 2 Oct (1).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta**. A flock of 4, closely followed by another of 7, flying W on 2 Oct — white with black bills, dark legs and yellow feet.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*. One circling platform on 12 Sep.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*. One immature in flight on 27 Aug was vigorously mobbed by a party of terns. It took refuge on a nearby cargo barge where it remained overnight.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*. A fine male on 1 Sep - the only duck seen during the whole period.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. One female on a crane jib on 5 Oct; it had caught a small passerine.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*. A fine male am on 12 Sep.

Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus**. Probable females with large very conspicuous white rump patches on 11 and 21 Sep, and an uncertain (U) on 15 Oct.

Pallid Harrier *C. macrourus*. A splendid male perched on top of the flarestack at Zuluf GOSP 4 on 27 Sep.

Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*. One flying W at 80ft on 2 Oct.

Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus*. A fine male with the character of the Northern race settled on radio tower of Zuluf GOSP 3 on 2 Oct. Another was seen in position 25°10'N 54°55'E on 21 Oct.

Hobby *F. subbuteo*. One on 15 Sep catching dragonflies, another on 8 Oct.

Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*. Singles on 11 and 15 Sep, and 1, 2, and 13 Oct.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*. One flushed from deck on 2 Sep.

Crane Sp. *Grus* sp. A V-formation of 40 cranes flying due S at about 500ft was seen on 10 Sep but were too far distant to identify whether Common or Demoiselle Cranes.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squaterola* (U). A single in flight on 4 Aug.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. Singles on 26 Aug and 7 Sep.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. One on 3 Oct.

Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*. 25 Jul (1), 17 Aug (3 prob. in flight), and 4 Oct (1).

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*. Two late afternoon on helo pad on 22 Aug.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*. One overnight on cargo barge 31 Aug/1 Sep.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* and Pomarine Skua *S. pomarinus*. About a dozen were sighted between July and Ocotber. Both species were positively identified (3 Arctic and 3 Pomarine), but some were impossible to differentiate.

Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*. None seen on oilfield area, but ND identified several on rig-tow to Dubai, south of the area on 18 Oct.

Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*. 2 seen at Zuluf on 29 Sep. Generally a common late arrival in the Gulf but by the time DMS left on 12 Oct the species had not arrived in force.

Herring Gull *L. argentatus*. One immature arrived on 25 Aug and several more by 31 Aug. Numbers gradually increased Sep and Oct; most adults were of yellow-legged race.

Swift Tern *Sterna bergii*. Common throughout the period.

Lesser Crested Tern *S. bengalensis*. Small fishing parties often visited the area during the period.

White-cheeked Tern *S. repressa*. A summer visitor and breeder in the Gulf, common on the oilfield in July, August and early September. Many first year birds mixed with adults. The great majority abruptly disappeared from the area on 11 Sep, though occasional birds were seen in late September.

Saunder's Little Tern *S. saundersi*. Two at Zuluf on 30 Aug.

Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus*. Fairly common in July and August. None seen after 8 Sep.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*. A considerable passage movement was noted between 28 Jul and 10 Oct. 43 were recorded, mostly ones and twos and small groups of up to six.

Rufous Turtle Dove *S. orientalis*. One arrived aboard construction barge at Zuluf on 26 Sep and remained until 2 Oct. It was observed at very close quarters, and DMS is familiar with this species from the Indian Himalayas; this record is well west of its normal range.

European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*. One resting on deck of cargo barge on 14 Sep. ND recorded another at Marjan GOSP 3 on 1 Nov.

Swift *Apus* sp. One probable Common Swift *A. apus* around Marjan GOSP 3 at 0800 on 7 Aug.

Alpine Swift *A. melba*. One flew overhead very fast at 80ft headed ESE at 1700 on 1 Oct; this is the first record by DMS in the Gulf.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*. One aboard briefly on 29 Aug, and a flock of 10 on a helipad of a nearby jacket were probably also the same species.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *M. superciliosus*. One at Zuluf GOSP 4 on 5 Sep; singles on 6 and 8 Sep probably the same bird.

European Roller. *Coracias garrulus*. One on Marjan GOSP 3 22 Aug, another at Zuluf 9-10 Sep.

Hoopoe. *Upupa epops*. About 60 individuals were seen in the area throughout the period; they were clearly in no rush to go anywhere and many would hang about for several days. Common throughout July, August and September, but only a couple were seen in October.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella cinerea*. Three aboard cargo barge for 15 minutes on 12 Sep, in company with wagtails and swallows.

Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. A trickle between 20 Sep and 27 Oct: some 72 recorded.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*. 3 Sep (1), 5 Sep (2), and 6 Sep (1).

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis**. Singles briefly on 12 and 23 Sep.

Water Pipit *A. spinoletta** On 31 Oct and 1 Nov ND recorded a pipit most probably this species.

Tawny Pipit *S. campestris**. DMS feels sure that one aboard 3 Sep was this species, and also a possible on 7 Oct.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*. Earliest seen on 11 Oct, 26 Oct (2), 30 Oct (2), and 1 Nov (4).

Grey Wagtail *M. cinerea*. Eight identified between 1 Aug and 7 Oct.

Yellow Wagtail *M. flava*. 105 recorded between 7 Aug and 31 Oct, usually in small parties.

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*. One female aboard a cargo barge on 11 Sep.

Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*. 18 individuals recorded between 7 Aug and 12 Nov. Most were of the red-tailed race *isabellinus*, the remainder resembled *collurio*.

Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. Two aboard 15 Sep: one was caught and identity confirmed by wing formula.

Marsh Warbler *A. palustris**. One aboard cargo barge on 13 Sep; very tame, and observed closely.

Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus*. A fine specimen aboard construction barge am on 29 Sep.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*. One caught and examined at Marjan GOSP 3 on 13 Aug.

Upcher's Warbler *H. languida*. One aboard barge on 6 Aug and another 11 Sep.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*. One briefly aboard on 26 Sep.

Desert Lesser Whitethroat *S. minula**. One recorded by ND on 16 Oct 20nm SE of Zuluf Field.

Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca*. Singles recorded all day 7-8 Sep, and briefly 19, 23 and 29 Sep.

Garden Warbler *S. borin*. One briefly on 4 Sep: DMS' first record in the Gulf.

Menetries' Warbler *S. mystacea*. One on 11 Sep thought by ND to be Subalpine Warbler is more likely to be this species.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (U). One probable on 8 Oct.

Chiffchaff *P. collybita*. One on 10 Oct.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*. 17 individuals recorded 5 Sep-11 Oct.

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*. One male, on 11 Sep, in company with other species including Spotted Flycatchers. A female on 11 Oct may have been Collared *F. albicollis*.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *F. parva*. One fine female on 3 Oct (DMS' first record for Gulf). ND also recorded four possible (2M and 2F) between 26 Oct and 1 Nov.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*. One female aboard at noon 8 Sep.

Whinchat *S. rubetra*. One female was caught having landed on the head of a crewman on 27 Sep. Another was seen on 8 Oct.

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. One female aboard construction barge on 9 Oct.

Blue-throat *Luscinia svecica*. Five singles, mostly female, between 1 Sep and 28 Oct. ND saw a colourful male on 28 Oct.

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*. One female caught aboard on 6 Aug, and another sighted on 9 Oct.

Rufous Bushchat *Cercotrichas galactotes*. One aboard materials barge late afternoon 30 Aug.

Wheatears *Oenanthe* sp.

Over 80 wheatears were recorded during the period. Good males were very few, making identification a perpetual problem. Most of the males seemed to be in some kind of "eclipse" plumage, not at all like the beautiful and boldly marked specimens in our guides. There were however several notable exceptions.

Common Wheatear *O. oenanthe*. Regularly seen from 30 Aug onwards; an estimated total of 30 came down on the boats, barges and platforms.

Desert Wheatear *O. deserti*. Easy to identify by its tail pattern; about 20 recorded.

Finsch's Wheatear *O. finschii*. One probable female on 26 Aug, a splendid male on 3 Oct, and a possible female on 9 Oct.

Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina*. Five positive sightings after 5 Sep, and others possibly overlooked. This species becomes easier to identify after seeing it a few times, especially when in company with other wheatears.

Black-eared Wheatear *O. hispanica**. Five probable males in very poor plumage seen between 5-12 Sep.

Mourning Wheatear *O. lugens*. One positively identified on 19 Sep and other probables seen on 9 and 25 Sep, and 2 Oct.

Hooded Warbler *O. monacha*. One female was watched closely aboard a materials barge 1630-1800 on 5 Oct, busy with other wheatears catching insects. Identified by unique tail pattern, and buoyant butterfly-like flight was another strong characteristic. DMS' first record of this species.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*. One clearly observed aboard construction barge 28 Sep; the first Gulf record for DMS.

Cinereous Bunting *E. cineracea*. On 21 Aug two aboard showed the yellow belly of the Iranian race *semenowi*. During late July and early August a small party of buntings were hanging about Marjan oilfield, living on the construction barges. All seemed to be immatures or females, very hard to identify, but thought also to be this species.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis**. ND described a sparrow which was probably this species, on 28 Oct.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*. One adult and an immature on a construction barge on 31 Jul, and further immatures on 18 Aug (2), and 27 Aug (2).

Captain D. M. Simpson, M.N., 20 Heather Drive, Eskdale Park, Whitby, North Yorkshire.

THE OUTER HEBRIDES

By Peter Cunningham

Like an immense aircraft carrier, secured fore and aft in the north-west approaches to the British Isles, the Outer Hebrides provide a refuge to many transatlantic vagrant birds. The prevailing westerly winds carry some North American migrants across the ocean, and the lucky ones, perhaps including a few which have been ship-assisted, make a landfall here. Eagle Clarke and other field-workers on St. Kilda, 40 miles to the west, have shown the frequency of this traffic but observers are regrettably absent in winter. Only chance records at that time of year therefore fall to the handful of ornithologists in the other inhabited islands (see map, Fig. 1), most vagrants dying in obscurity or proceeding elsewhere.

Similarly, a number of vagrants from northern Europe are borne on strong easterlies across the North Sea, as records from the bird observatory on Fair Isle, between Orkney and Shetland, have shown; some of these alight a further 150 miles downwind, as a very last resort, on the Hebrides.

There is no doubt that the variety of habitat afforded here improves the chances of survival for these involuntary visitors, but our weather sometimes must give arctic survivors cause to wonder if their journey was really necessary. Nevertheless waders find our western beaches rich with invertebrate life, wildfowl our shallow

South Uist, west coast beach - haunt of countless waders.
Photo: Peter Cunningham

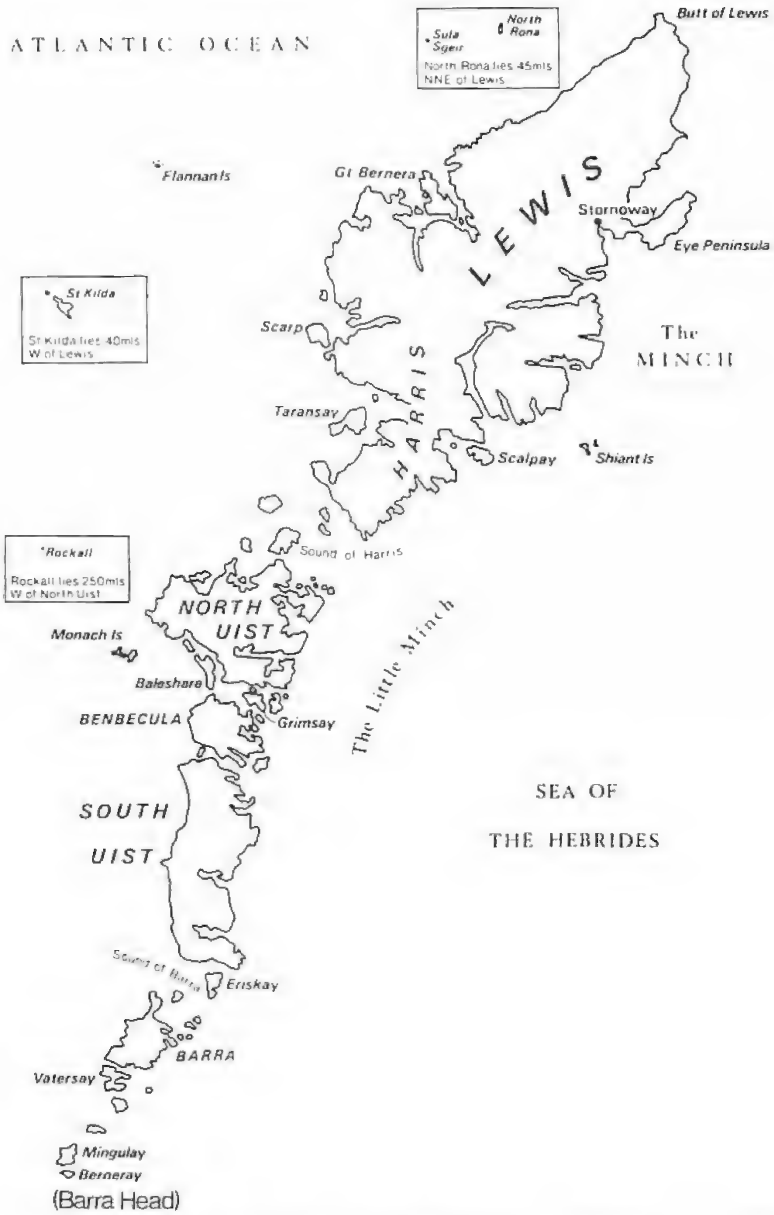


FIG. 1.—The Outer Hebrides.

eutrophic lochs and the machair grasslands a home from home, and the passerines our growing number of afforested areas, in particular the large mixed woodland at Stornoway, a welcome sanctuary.

About 28 American species are represented in local records. Compiled from all available historical and contemporary reports, these vagrants comprise nearly one-tenth of all the species which have been identified in the Outer Hebrides.

A further score or so species originating from Europe make up an imposing total of exotic birds, and enough to make life interesting for any Hebridean birdwatcher. One of the four records of Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* in local reports turned up aboard M.V. *Rubens* 12 miles north of Lewis in 1976; it would have been overlooked but for the subsequent report in *Sea Swallow* 29, p23.

Outstanding among those of American origin, with some of which even readers of *Sea Swallow* may be unfamiliar, have been a Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (1983-5), an American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* (1932), several duck including a couple of Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* (1980) and many waders including a Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (1983) and the two Yellowlegs — Greater *Tringa melanoleuca* (1978) and Lesser *T. flavipes* (1975). A personal disappointment was a Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio* which the writer found on a Lewis croft in 1964 and carefully filmed at short range with a movie camera, only to find later that the camera had been empty and his written report rejected by the experts! Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* and Sabine's Gull *L. sabini* are fairly recent occurrences, and a Laughing Gull *L. atricilla* was a highlight of the writer's visit to St. Kilda in 1980. It was apparently sustained by sausages from the army canteen there, which were either fatal or an effective deterrent for it disappeared soon afterwards. Vagrant passerines have been recorded more often from St. Kilda than elsewhere in the Outer Hebrides where they are less easily found.

A surprisingly large number of "little brown land jobs" have nevertheless been noted, in particular a Yellow-rumped Warbler *Dendroica coronata* (1982) and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (1983). A Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1965), an American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (1975), an Evening Grosbeak *Hesperiphona vespertina* (1969) and a Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (1986) have been examples of St. Kilda's delights. Additionally, there are many off-lying uninhabited islands, seldom visited by ornithologists, whose avian visitors come and go unrecorded. Exceptions have been, for example, a Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (1908) on the Flannan Isles, Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (1964) on North Rona, and a Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* was observed by a party from the R.A.F. Ornithological Society off Barra Head in 1979.

Outstanding amongst the European vagrants was a drake Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* which diverted visiting "twitchers" from more sensitive species for 12 years. It was in the habit of wooing duck Common Eiders *Somateria mollissima*, of whose chastity it must have tired, for it disappeared in 1984. A Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*, a Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* and four Ivory Gulls *Pagophila eburnea* have also occurred at different times during the last 70 years. Stray raptors have included a Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (1973), three Hobbies *F. subbuteo*, a Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* (1986) and an Eleonora's Falcon *F. eleonorae* (1985), but the last has yet to be accepted by the *British Birds* Rarities Committee.

We have so far dealt with only accidental occurrences on the islands, but they receive also a varied seasonal passage of summer and winter passengers, some of which, happily, remain over winter or to breed. Of the latter, the Corncrake *Crex crex*, the Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* and the two skuas — Arctic *Stercorarius parasiticus* and the Great Skua *Catharacta skua*, excite the greatest interest. The phalaropes however, may be finding such public exposure embarrassing for they are becoming scarcer each year. The skuas, on the other hand, are colonising the southern isles and the Great can be found on St. Kilda. North Rona, the Shiant Isles and Barra Head. Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* are the first to arrive followed by Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Willow

South Uist. Loch Druidibeg National Nature Reserve for Greylag Geese, Black-throated Diver, and hunting ground for Golden Eagle, Hen Harrier and Merlin.
Photo: Peter Cunningham

Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus*, Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea*, Common *S. hirundo* and Little Terns *S. albifrons*, Whinchats *Saxicola rubetra* and Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata*, more or less in that order. The Stornoway Woods have occasional Wood Warbler *P. sibilatrix* and Garden Warblers *Sylvia borin* and Chiffchaff *P. collybita*. The Gannets *Sula bassana* of St. Kilda and Sula Sgeir are well known, those on the latter being subject, under licence, to a traditional annual cull for food by the men of Ness in Lewis.

Vast numbers of migrating geese overfly the Outer Hebrides in autumn, but few land on for the winter months. Three small flocks of Greenland White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons* return each year to the same grounds in Lewis and South Uist, and Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* are regularly found on off-shore islands of Lewis and in the Sounds of Harris and Barra. Migrant Greylags *Anser anser* winter on all the islands, but Pinkfeet *A. brachyrhyncus* seldom stay long. There is a seasonal passage of Pale-bellied Brents *Branta bernicla*, the most remarkable of which occurred one wild October night in 1970, when a bemused householder on an isthmus in west Harris found his garden, and open lighted garage swarming with about 150 dead and dying Brents, which had become disorientated by the lights while flying south under the storm. A few Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* summer in the southern isles, but winter brings their welcome and nostalgic trumpeting to lochs from the Butt to Barra. Glaucous *L. hyperboreus* and Iceland Gulls *L. glaucoides* are a winter feature of Stornoway harbour, and in 1984 occurred the latter in a spectacular profusion, outnumbering the local Herring Gulls *L. argentatus* on one occasion, when 45 were counted in the inner harbour alone.

The regular "crew", so to speak, comprises, in addition to the usual Highland species, large populations of Greylag Geese and Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* in the Uists. Lewis and Harris are partiularly well off for Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, Buzzard *Buteo buteo* and Merlin *F. columbarius*, and occasional White-tailed Sea Eagles *Haliaetus albicilla* are seen. The southern isles have also small numbers of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* and Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus*.

It may now be apparent to the most casual reader that the birds of the Outer Hebrides do not lack interest at any time of the year. The islands themselves, and their inhabitants, have their own particular charm — if allowance is made for the weather and island customs. The writer will be grateful to passing ships for reports of unusual species off-shore, and glad to help any visiting members of R.N.B.W.S.

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OBSERVATIONS ON ALBATROSS ISLAND IN THE BAY OF ISLES, SOUTH GEORGIA 15 - 16 APRIL 1986

By Lieutenant Angus K. Ross, B.Sc., Royal Navy — H.M.S. *Hermione*

Introduction

The Bay of Isles has long been regarded by British Antarctic Survey (B.A.S.) ornithologists as one of the most interesting habitats for South Atlantic seabirds. A sea passage along the north coast of South Georgia to Cumberland Bay produces seabirds in such bewildering concentrations that the coastline seems to cry out for a thorough investigation. Inspired by the article by Lieutenant Commander M. K. Barritt, R.N., *Sea Swallow* 33:37-39, and having the advantage of a seat in a helicopter, the ship's Medical Officer and I decided to attempt a survey of one of the outlying islands in the Bay of Isles. Albatross Island was chosen since it was felt to be the most likely to hold a suitable landing site.

The Bay of Isles is situated on the north coast of South Georgia (see Fig. 1) and is therefore partially sheltered from the prevailing south-westerly winds. The weather during the observation was nevertheless cold, wet and cloudy with severe snow squalls running across the Bay from the Grace and Brunonia Glaciers on the mainland. The ground, where it was clear of tussock, was exceedingly boggy and waterlogged suggesting a similar weather pattern in the preceding weeks.

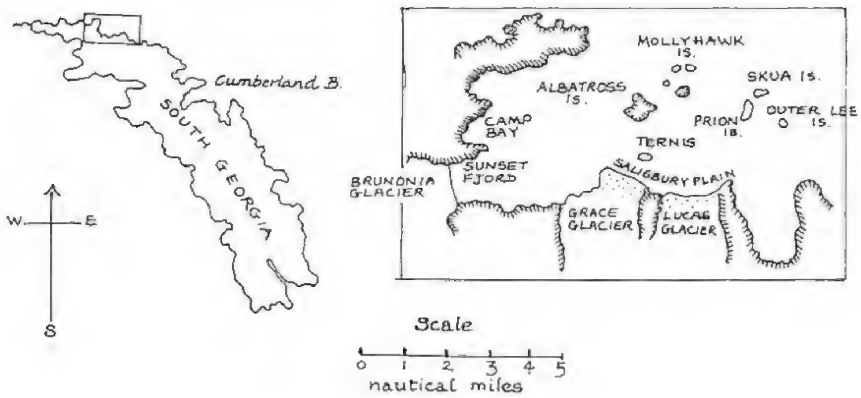

Fig. 1. The Bay of Isles.

History

From an ornithological viewpoint, Albatross Island was probably first described in 1913 by the famous American naturalist Robert Murphy during his first research cruise as the assistant navigator of the whaling brig *Daisy*. Murphy charted the original map of the Bay of Isles during the winter of 1912-13, whilst the crew of the *Daisy* were engaged in the rather less charitable task of hunting Elephant Seals. Many of the inlets, headlands and fjords still bear the names he gave them, including Grace Glacier named after his wife whom he had married a few months before sailing from Dominica. Murphy, who had a love for the oceans and the world's wild places, was enormously impressed by the Albatross as his diary entry for his first sighting records:

> "I now belong to a higher cult of mortals, for I have seen the Albatross! I have been watching the wonderful gliding of the grandest of birds during much of the day. At six this morning . . . in the sunlight, flew the long-anticipated bird, even more majestic, more supreme in its element, than my imagination had pictured . . . and as it turned and turned, now flashing the bright underside, now showing the black feathering that extended from wrist to tip on the upper surface of the wings, the narrow planes seemed to be neither beating nor scarcely quivering. Lying on the invisible currents of the breeze, the bird appeared merely to follow its pinkish bill at random."
>
> Robert Cushman Murphy, Oct. 1912.

Murphy chronicled his visit to South Georgia in his book *Logbook for Grace* and, in turn, these experiences led to his classic work *Oceanic Birds of South America* first published in 1936. The many other highpoints of Murphy's life are far too numerous to mention here.

More recently, Frank Todd from Sea World, San Diego, visited Albatross Island in April 1977, counting 103 pairs of breeding Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*, and Gerry Clark from New Zealand was there in October 1984 recording 109 chicks.

The island has been well documented over the years by the B.A.S., and many of the original records are held by the Survey's headquarters in Cambridge.

Observations

The walking survey was conducted during the daylight hours of 16 April and the route taken is shown on the map at Fig. 2. This was considered to provide the best coverage in the limited time available. The going was extremely heavy due to the thick tussock and it was immediately obvious that two species predominated: the Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* and the Wandering Albatross.

Giant Petrel

As dawn broke, we were immediately aware of them wheeling overhead in the high winds, their passage marked by an amazing whistling and crackling of air over their wings. Their manoeuvrability was astounding for such large birds, with individuals seemingly bent on self-destruction, plunging towards the cliffs and only swerving away with fractions of a second to spare. All the birds observed were of the dark phase, apart from a single very beautiful white individual seen airborne over the west coast. The area surrounding the camp was widely used as a roost by adult and sub-adult birds who swiftly lost their airborne grace once they alighted, filling the air with revolting retching sounds.

These roosts were relatively exposed and nearby to well trodden "runways" which were observed to be used by both petrels and albatrosses, although those adjacent to the latter's nests were far better established. The petrels' nesting sites on the other hand seemed to be lower down the slopes, on flatter ground and well sheltered by tussock. They were widespread throughout the island (see Fig. 2), and all inhabited by a single large chick, which was almost adult size and fast approaching adult status.

Most of the down had been shed and it was assumed that the young birds had been hatched in late December or early January, and were due to fledge later in April. The chicks were fed at intervals but this was the only contact observed between the young and the parents. What can only be described as 'mewing' calls were heard from the adult birds, although the nestlings were silent and

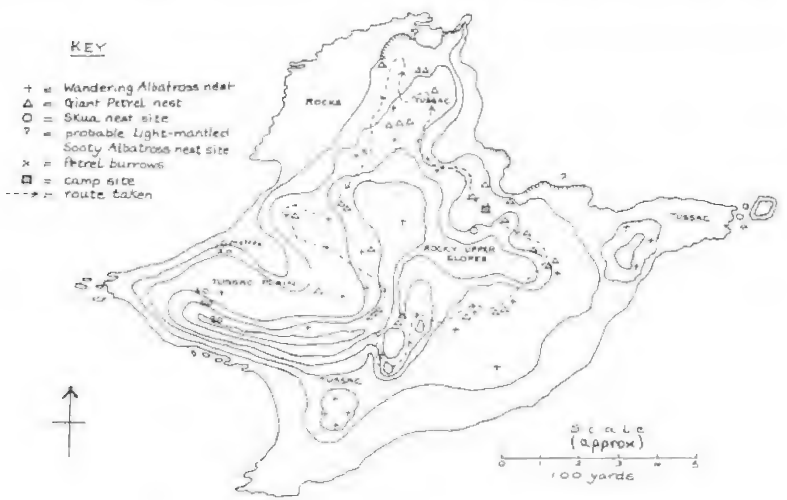

Fig. 2. Albatross Island - a rough survey

Giant Petrels roosting

did not indulge in the hissing and spitting for which they are notorious. They seemed, without exception, to be totally unconcerned at our presence. One thing that was surprising was the very close proximity between some Giant Petrel and Wandering Albatross nests: in some cases a mere three feet apart. With both adults in attendance there cannot have been a great deal of room. It is difficult to see how any advantage could be gained from this, and it would be interesting to compare observations from other sites to determine whether it is the norm, or whether it is merely a product of nest site competition between the two species. The two chicks certainly seemed quite at ease alongside one another and no interaction was observed.

Wandering Albatross

Their nests were less numerous than the Giant Petrels, but equally widespread around our route, (see Fig. 2), although they seemed to have a preference for the more exposed areas and higher ground generally. The nests were very conspicuous, being occupied either by brooding adult birds or unattended chicks which stood out clear against the dark background.

The age of the brooding birds varied enormously but only one elderly, all white individual was found; the remainder exhibited varying degrees of immature plumage. The adults were without exception almost serene in their composure, being completely unconcerned by our intrusion into their windy world. They watched our clumsy passage through the driving rain with expressions of smug contentment on their faces, totally oblivious to their soggy surroundings, the water bouncing off their oiled feathers in gleaming droplets. It was almost as though they knew they were something special! Very few adult movements were observed, although landing seemed to be preceded by a gentle circle around the area

Giant Petrel chick - Albatross Island

alighting on a "runway" often some distance away from the nest. There then followed a rather ungainly 'waddle' into position.

In contrast to their parents, the unattended chicks were extremely lively and indulged in much bill-clapping and neck-craning at the slightest movement nearby, be it bird or man. The clapping of the bill was amazingly loud, sounding like two hollow tubular bones being vigorously beaten together. This signal was offered to anything that moved, including the approaching parent, which would seem to suggest that it was a begging signal rather than a threat response. The chicks were far smaller than their Giant Petrel counterparts which would correspond with their later hatching time, believed to be March. They were however mature enough to be left alone for extended periods.

These two species were by far the most conspicuous, but amongst others encountered were the handsome Light-mantled Sooty Albatrss *Phoebetria palpebrata*, two pairs being resident on the only suitable cliffs in the area. Although adult birds were seen both in flight and alighting on the cliff area, breeding could not be confirmed since no nests were visible from our vantage points. South Georgia has many beautiful treasures but the haunting, drawn-out "pee-ow" call of the adult Light-mantled Sooty Albatross echoing around the sea cliffs must surely be one of the most memorable.

A single White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* was observed in flight on the evening of 15 April and a concentration of large burrows found to the north of the island, (see Fig. 2), may indicate a colony. These appeared identical to known White-chinned Petrel burrows that were found in the Stromness area, although more observation would be required to prove this conclusively.

Giant Petrel - adjacent nest site

A single pair of Antarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica* vigorously defended the hillside behind our camp but no young or nest were seen; we did not press the point!

Finally, some species were surprising by their apparent absence. The Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* and the Grey-headed Albatross *D. chrysostoma*, for instance, are both extremely prolific offshore along the north coast and yet during our 24 hour period on the island not a single individual was seen. Prions *Pachyptila sp.* seemed to be absent also, there being no tell-tale remains on the ground as is usually the case when they are present in some numbers. Time was short however, and it is quite possible that these largely nocturnal species could have been overlooked during our brief visit.

Wandering Albatross brooding

Wandering Albatross chick

Conclusion

Albatross Island seems a totally undisturbed environment harbouring a healthy concentration of breeding Wandering Albatrosses and Giant Petrels, and a variety of other species deserving better coverage than they receive here. During the short survey 46 breeding pairs of Wandering Albatrosses were counted, and slightly more Giant Petrels (52). Both species nested in extraordinarily close proximity to one another with no apparent ill effects. Bearing in mind the ground covered, these numbers would seem to match fairly well with the far more detailed work mentioned in the introduction. It is strongly felt that the island merits a more thorough study over a longer period.

With such a large breeding population, it is vitally important that the birds remain undisturbed by the passage of large numbers of onlookers, but small parties of dedicated naturalists could and should be encouraged to visit the island. There are few such places in the world where one can find the Wandering Albatross on the nest and watch the fascinating behaviour of these oceanic birds at first hand.

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NOTES ON SEABIRD REPORTS RECEIVED 1986

By Stephen E. Chapman and Captain N. G. Cheshire, M.N.

This year reports have been submitted by 20 seagoing observers. W. F. Curtis sent in a mammoth 84 page report, the highlights of which were summarised last year in Bill Bourne's and Bill Curtis' joint review of the South Atlantic Bird Islands, *Sea Swallow* 35:24-34, and are not therefore repeated in this analysis.

Covering an exciting voyage from Ijmuiden, to Suez, the Arabian Gulf, Singapore, Mauritius, ports in West Africa, Durban, Manila, the Far East, and back to Fos via Suez, Piet and Kathy Meeth sent in 34 pages of observations, distribution maps and sketches. It is a great pity that space does not permit more than sharing with the reader some of the highlights from these extensive ocean voyages.

As an indication of the overall geographic scope of numbers of reports received in 1986, about 48% are from the North Atlantic, 36% from the South Atlantic, 3% from the Pacific Ocean, 7% from the Indian Ocean and the remaining 6% from other areas. These percentages of course simply reflect no more than where members ships have been sailing but do show a significant reduction in the number of reports from the Pacific Ocean; 27% came from this area in 1985.

Reports considered in this summary were received from the following observers whose observations are individually identified by their initials:

Lieutenant Commander F. J. Aitken, R.N. — H.M.S. *Beaver*. Singapore, Jakarta, Darwin, Newcastle, Sydney, Diego Garcia. August-October 1986 (6 page report).

Mr R. C. L. Aran — O.W.S. *Starella* and O.W.S. *Cumulus*. Multiple voyages between Fleetwood and Greenock to Ocean Station LIMA (57°N20°W). December 1985-October 1986 (9 page report).

Chief Petty Officer C. A. R. Bailey, R.N. — H.M.S. *Achilles*. Portsmouth, Gibraltar, Ascension and Falklands (8 page report); U.K., Nassau, Key West, Baltimore, Turks & Caicos Islands, Belize, Houston, Cartegena, Antigua, Portland. November 1984 (9 page report).

Yeoman B. Bewsher — R.F.A. *Regent*. Portland, Indian Ocean, Suez Canal, Ascension Island, Falklands, South Georgia, Ascension, U.K. July-November 1985 (19 page narrative report and check list). R.F.A. *Olmeda*. Portsmouth to Singapore via Cape Horn, April-July 1986 (7 page typescript).

Captain P. W. G. Chilman — M.V. *Donovania*. North Sea. August-September 1983 (5 page report).

Radio Officer W. F. Curtis — R.F.A. *Sir Bedivere*. Falklands and South Georgia. February-August1986 (84 pages of reports).

Captain P. C. Dyer — M.V. *Norwich Service*. Sean Gas Fields and North Sea. September-October 1985 (2 census sheets).

Radio Officer M. G. Finn — M.V. *Nosira Lin*. Albany, Jeddah, Vado (Italy). January 1986 (3 page report); Ushant, St. Lawrence. April 1986 (1 page report).

Third Officer T. B. Holt — S.S. *David D. Irwin*. Morgan City, Louisiana, to San Juan, P.R.: M.V. *Delta Seahore*. Beaumont, Tampa and east coast USA. February-July 1985 (3 page report). SS Fairwind. Beaumont to Mombassa. July-October 1985 (6 census reports).

Chief Officer P. W. Jackson — M.V. *Act 8*. Rotterdam, Melbourne, Port Chalmers, Suez. July-August 1986 (3 census reports).

Third Officer A. R. Louch — R.R.S. *Discovery*. Falmouth, Tenerife, mid-Atlantic, Tenerife and return to Falmouth. May-July 1986 (6 page census). R.R.S. *Frederick Russell*. Sea of Hebrides and southern North Sea. September-November 1986 (5 page census report).

Mr P. Meeth — M.V. *Nedlloyd Westerkerk*. Ijmuiden, Suez, Salalah, Dubai, Singapore, Mauritius, Douala, Abidjan, Lome, Apapa, Tema, Cotonou, Durban, Manila, Kaohsiung, Sakai, Inchon, Hong Kong. Singapore; M.V. *Nedlloyd Houtman*. Singapore, Suez, Fos. April-September 1986. (Detailed census reports, maps and analysis).

Captain K. Salwegter — M.V. *Amstelvaart*. Richards Bay to Rotterdam. January - February 1986 (3 page report); Antwerp, Wilmington, Cristobal, Los Angeles. April-May 1986 (3 page report).

Captain D. M. Simpson — M.V. *Pacific Bear*. Iskenderun Bay. December 1985 - January 1986 (1 page report). M.V. *Big Orange XV*. Sharjah and offshore May 1986 (1 page report). M.V. *Big Orange XI*. Port of Sharjah. May-November 1986 (3 page report).

Second Officer R. J. Tucker — M.V. *Act 5*. Melbourne, Botany Bay, Port Chalmers, Panama. March-April 1985 (2 page census report).

Chief Officer M. G. Weir — M.V. *San Lorenzo*. Three round voyages Cadiz, Montreal, Livorno. 1986 (12 page report).

Radio Officer W. Weitkowitz — M.V. *Anna Wesch*. Antwerp, Aran, Algiers, Aviles, Antwerp, Annaba, Skikda, Hamburg, Rouen, Algiers, Oran, Antwerp. November 1985-March 1986 (22 page report). M.V. *Kalymnos*. Rouen, Port Said, Beirut, Izmir, Heraklion, Salerno, Valencia, Felixstowe, Rouen, Turkey, Crete, Italy and back to northern Europe. September-November 1986. (21 page report).

Captain J. W. Welch — M.V. *Strathconon*. Kobe, San Francisco, Los Angeles to Tokyo, via Unimak. February-March 1986 (4 census sheets). Three round voyages New York and Boston to Rotterdam. September-November 1986 (10 page census report).

Captain R. L. Westwater — M.V. *Irma M*. Antwerp, Almirante, Turbo, Gothenburg, Panama, Gothenburg, Cortes, Almirante, Bremerhaven. August-November 1986 (14 page report).

Captain R. R. Will — M.V. *Al Zahrah*. Jeddah to Montevideo. January-February 1986 (1 page report).

NOTES ON SPECIES

ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. On passage from Ascension to the Falklands CARB saw the first Wanderer at 26°41'S 29°53'W (sea temp. 21°C) on 10 Nov 85. A single immature at 25°50'S 0°26'W on 24 Sep 85 (TBH). Whilst crossing the Indian Ocean PWJ saw nine birds between 37°06'S 33°34'E and 39°59'S 80°50'E from 14 Jul to 19 Jul 86. He remarked on 'orange speckling on either side of the head at the collar' observed on some birds. This orange or pink ear stain was found to be present on about 75% of South Georgia adult population during 1962-4, Tickell (1980) and 58% of Macquarie Is. birds during 1876/77, Tomkins (1983). Tickell suggested the stain is externally acquired and may be caused by excessive amounts of preen gland secretion reacting with seawater. Alternatively this colouration may be due to red krill in their food.

White-capped Albatross *Diomedea cauta*. On passage Beaumont to Mombasa TBH reported a total of 18 when rounding the Cape at 2 miles off on 29 Sep 85.

Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*. A single bird sighted for about 10 minutes in the Atlantic at 49°08'N 16°08'W on 5 Dec 86 was reported by M. H. Thurston on board RRS *Challenger*. The description included the following: 'wing span 20% greater than adult Great Black-backed Gull present at the same time, mantle and tail blackish, head and nape grey, under wing white with narrow back leading and trailing edges the anterior band somewhat variable in width but nowhere exceeding 20% of the wing chord. Neck, breast, belly and rump white, bill relatively slender, dark at a distance but showing yellowish culmincorn and pinkish yellow unguis at close range. Flight characteristics, buoyant gliding, on stiff slightly down-curved wings, mostly close to the sea surface but occasionally at 15m, wind speed 6 knots.' Three were seen by RRW approaching the River Plate, 30 miles E from Pta del Este on 9 Feb 86. TBH noted two at 28°17'S 4°13'E on 25 Sep 85.

Laysan Albatross *Diomedea immutablis*. On passage from Kobe to San Francisco JWW saw five at 36½°N 155°E on 10 Feb 86, one at 39°N 180° on 13 Feb thence daily in small numbers until 18 Feb 86 at 38°N 131½°W. The same observer made a return voyage from Los Angeles to Kobe taking a more northerly route via Unimak Passage, Bering Sea and the Kurils. Fewer birds of this species were reported, a single at 40½°N 128½°W on 24 Feb 86, 2 at 46½°N 138°W on 25 and a single bird at 59°N 180°E in the Barents Sea on 2 Mar 86.

Black-browed Albatross. Saunders Island.
October 1985.
Photo: C.P.O. G. Bennet, R.N., H.M.S. *Amazon*
(*Sea Swallow* Photo Competition 1986)

Grey-headed Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma.* Two of this species were reported by PWJ from the South Indian Ocean 20 Jul 86 at 39°59′S 90°28′E. He also saw two SE of Tasmania at 46°30′S 151°04′E on 13 Aug 86 and three at 41°17′S 129°16′E on 15 Aug south of Australia. In the South Pacific, east of New Zealand, singles were seen by RJT at 43°07′S 177°45′E on 3 Apr 85 and the next day at 41°15′S 177°20′E.

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria palpebrata.* A single was seen by PWJ at 41°45′S 128°33′E south of Australia on 24 Jul 86. He saw two more in the same area at 41°17′S 129°16′E on 16 Aug 86. The sea surface temperature range for these sightings was 10°-10.5°C.

FULMARS, PRIONS, PETRELS, SHEARWATERS *PROCELLARIIDAE*

Giant Petrel *Macronectes* sp. In the Falklands area CARB made the following routine counts: 17 Nov 85, 50+ in Falkland Islands Patrol Zone (F.I.P.Z.); 20 Nov, 4 at Mares Bay; 21 Nov, 50+ in F.I.P.Z.; 23 Nov, 100+ at Saunders Island; and on 25 Nov 85, 20+ in Falkland Sound. They were not identified to species. Both occur at the Falklands with inshore birds usually belonging to the southern species, Devillers P. and Terschuren J.A. (1980). Single birds were identified as Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* by PWJ off southern Australia at 40°18′S 137°50′E on 25 Jul and at 41°17′S 129°16′E on 15 Aug 86.

The following observations were attributed to the Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli.* A series of records by PWJ whilst he was crossing the South Indian Ocean: he saw three at 39°58′S 71°16′E on 18 Jul 86, 5 at 39°59′S 80°50′E on 19, 5 at 41°25′S 100°01′E on 21 and a single at 42°20′S 109°42′E on 22 Jul 86. Those seen on 18th and 19th were described as dark brown all over except for being slightly paler around bill. Bills were described as being 'pale lemon with dark tip'. The very dark uniform plumage would indicate these were immatures. He saw another off southern Australia at 41°45′S 128°33′E on 24 Jul 86.

Cape Pigeon *Daption capense.* Crossing the South Indian Ocean PWJ had a maximum count of 20 at 39°58′S 71°16′E on 18 Jul 86, and 12 the next day at 39°59′S 80°50′E. On 25 Jul 86 he saw 12 at 40°18′S 137°50′E off South Australia. PM saw six at 26°44′S 64°38′E on 4 Aug, one at 24°11′S 70°58′E on 5 Aug and two at 21°28′S 76°37′E on 6 Aug 86.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis.* There were many records from the North Atlantic. A notable record was of three birds seen by MGW in Cabot Strait 50 miles SE of Cape Bay on 14 Jun 86. There were many records from PWGC for Scotland, Shetland Islands, northern North Sea during August and September 1983 including concentrations of 1000+ at 57°44′N 5°30′E off SW Norway on 6 Aug, 1000+ the same day at 57°46′N 8°53′E in the

Skagerrak, 185 at 57°49′N 9°40′E on 8 Aug and 550 counted in 80 min at 58°39′N 0°22′W off N.E. Scotland on 14 Aug 83. During September 83 PWGC counted 294 in 70 min at 57°48′N 8°35′E in the Skagerrak on the 7th, 199 nearby at 57°49′N 8°52′E on 14th. In the Bering Sea JWW described a dark phase bird seen at 54°N 180° on 2 Mar 86.

Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*. A series of sightings were made by PWJ when crossing the south Indian Ocean during July 1986. He tentatively identified birds seen on 17th and 18th at 39°56′S 62°23′E and 39°58′S 71°16′E, and made positive identifications on 20th, a single at 39°59′S 90°28′E, another at 41°25′S 100°01′E the next day and one south of Australia at 41°45′S 128°33′E on 24 Jul 86. He made further observations off S.W. Australia where this species is a winter breeder on Eclipse Island near Albany and on other offshore islands; a single at 37°27′S 120°08′E on 16 Aug 86, another the following day at 34°34′S 113°56′E and five at 32°09′S 107°09′E on 18 Aug 86. PM noted singles at 26°44′S 64°38′E on 4 Aug, at 24°11′S 70°58′E on 5 Aug, and at 19°12′S 81°05′E on 7 Aug 86. In the South Atlantic CARB saw three at 36°50′S 38°38′W.

White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessoni*. Two of these attractive petrels were seen by PWJ at 41°45′S 128°33′E on 24 Jul 86, and another the following day at 40°18′S 137°50′E, south of Australia. PM saw a single at 26°21′S 65°37′E on 4 Aug 86, sea temp 18°C.

Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*. On three occasions from a 150 foot supply vessel close off Haiti and the Dominican Republic, TBH noted these petrels and then subsequently made two further observations elsewhere as follows:

Number	Position	Date
6	2′ off Pointe a Gravios	22 Jan 85
1	2′ off Isla Alta Vela	24 Jan
1	10-15′ East of Alta Vela	,,
1	29°22′N 79°44′W	23 Feb
1	34°50′N 75°25′W	7 Jul

Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*. Several reports of this species were received from its normal South Atlantic range. RRW en route from Jeddah to Montevideo saw one at 35°S 10°W, two at 35°06′S 29°42′W, six at 35°06′S 38°36′W, and three at 35°S 47°36′W on 4, 6, 7 and 8 Feb. Also seen by CARB, six at 36°50′S 38°38′W and four at 46°12′S 50°50′W on 12 and 14 Nov 85.

Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris*. Sightings of single birds were reported by TBH at 32°26′S 29°18′E on 27 Sep and 29°08′S 33°27′E on 1 Oct 85.

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*. Crossing the Indian Ocean on a voyage from Durban to Manila PM saw a number of these petrels well into the tropics, with other southern ocean species (see Pintado and Great-winged Petrels) as detailed below:

Total daily number	Position S	E	Date	Sea temp. °C
23	26°44′	64°38′	4 Aug 86	17.9
44	24°11′	70°58′	5	19.6
29	21°28′	76°37′	6	20.6
36	19°12′	81°05′	7	21.8
42	16°44′	85°52′	8	22.3
57	13°44′	91°26′	9	23.7

Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma baraui.* In the tropical Indian Ocean PM reported this unusual but distinctive petrel as follows: three at 13°44′S 91°26′E on 9 Aug, and singles at 10°08′S 97°05′E on 10 Aug, and at 7°39′S 102°45′E on 11 Aug 86.

Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea.* An interesting series of observations were made in the South Indian Ocean and south of Australia by PWJ near the northern limits of the winter range of this species. He saw a single bird at 39°59′S 90°28′E on 20 Jul 86, five at 41°25′S 100°01′E on the 21st, four at 42°24′S 119°46′E on 23rd and a single at 41°45′S 128°33′E on 24 Jul 86. In his description of the birds he mentions the diagnostic feature the white tip on a dark tail. There are many records of beach wrecked birds around southern Australia and New Zealand, but few sightings at sea have been recorded.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii.* In the north-east Atlantic ARL reported a number as follows: two at 31°45′N 24°32′W on 21 May 86, three at 29°55′N 20°00′W on 26 May.

Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax.* Several observations by PM as follows: 57 at 14°12′N 49°29′E on 5 May, 17 at 19°58′N 58°46′W on 7 May and 27 at 24°31′N 58°00′E on 9 May 86. Later in the year westbound PM recorded singles at 6°22′N, 77°50′E on 15 Sep and at 9°55′N 60°33′E on 17 Sep, five at 11°44′N 53°07′E on 18 Sep and a single at 12°27′N 44°13′E next day.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*
Drawing by K. Meeth

Brown (Grey) Petrel *Procellaria cinerea.* In the South Indian Ocean four birds seen at 41°25'S 100°01'E on 21 Jul 86 were described by PWJ. It is seldom reported from Australian seas and keeps to cooler waters to the south.

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis.* On passage from Jeddah to Montivideo RRW recorded two 15 miles off East London on 31 Jan 86, six at 35°S 9°06'E on 2 Feb 86 and 15 when approaching the River Plate, 30 miles E from Pta del Este on 9 Feb 86. KS saw a single off Capetown on 6 Feb 86 and counted 20 at 33°20'S 17°26'E the same day.

Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucomelas.* Five at 35°30'N 146°30'E on 9 Feb, a single at 37°00'N 163°00'E on 11 Feb 86 and a flock of 40+ at 34°30'N 139°07'E on 8 Mar 86 (JWW). Ten at 20°58'N 114°25'E on 4 Jun, 340 at 25°33'N 122°41'E on 20 Aug and 236 at 31°41'N 131°59'E on 27 Aug 86 (PM). Observers off the east and west coast of Australia during the Austral summer should keep a look out for this species.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea.* Mainly summer records from the North Atlantic including 15 at 42°N 21°40'W on 23 Jun 86 (MGW). On passage from Antwerp to Panama RLW reported small numbers from Western Approaches 22/23 Aug 86 with the most southerly bird seen 188 miles WSW Flores in the Azores on 24 Aug. On passage from Portsmouth to Nassau CARB saw two at 44°02'N 22°35'W and two at 41°30'N 28°22'W on 24 and 25 Aug 86. JWW saw 10 at 45°N 31°W on 4 Oct 86. Later in the year WW saw small groups off Cape Finisterre on 15 Oct 86, several off Cape St. Vincent, Portugal the next day. In the western Mediterranean WW saw small groups at 37°05'N 5°19'E and at 36°50'N 12°09'E on 18 and 19 Oct 86. South of Tarifa, Straits of Gibraltor, WW saw a flock of 150+ on 9 Nov 86. From the Suez Canal PM reported a shearwater attributed to this species at the Little Bitter Lake on 22 Sep 86.

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis.* In the South Atlantic KS reported one at 29°S 13°E on 7 Feb 86 and two more the next day at 25½°S 11°E. Further south, CARB saw one at 46°12'S 50°50'W (sea temp. 12°C) on 14 Nov 85.

There were many records from the North Atlantic. Notable were the following from MGW: 250+ at 44°10'N 49°00'W (sea temp. 5°C) and a further 500+ later when crossing the shelf onto the Grand Banks on 7 Jun 86, and the next day he counted 47 in two hrs in the area 25 miles SSE Grande Miquelon. On 14 Jun he saw 35 feeding on small fish in Cabot St. 72 miles SE Cape Ray. During Autumn crossings of the North Atlantic JWW observed 600+ at 47½°N 21°W during ½ hour on 5 Oct 86, 250+ at 46°N 16°W in ½ hour on 15 Oct 86 and the next day 60+ at 44°N 21½°W in the same time period. JWW also saw 25 at 40½°N 71½°W off E. coast USA on 28 Oct 86, five at 43°N 49°W on 30 Oct 86 and nine the next day at 44°N 43½°W. Further east he saw 350+ at 49°N 20°W on 2 Nov 86.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*. The usual records from the North Atlantic from late spring until autumn were reported. There was a winter record from WW who saw two west of the Berlengas, Portugal 15 Jan 86. There is a tentative record from DMS on 8 Jun 86 from Iskenderun Bay in the extreme NE corner of the Mediterranean well east of the normal range of this species. He described a single large blackish shearwater much larger than a Manx, however he did not see the underwing well, so other long distance vagrants cannot of course be ruled out. Nine at 56°10'N 7°20'W, 12 miles off the Hebrides, on 18 Sept 86 (ARL). Singles at 52°10'N 3°20'E on 19 and 20 Oct 86 (ARL). Five off Newfoundland at 47°N 50°30'W on 5 Sep 86 (JWW).

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*. Off Newfoundland MGW counted 33 in a 2-hour period 25 miles SSE Grande Miquelon Is on 8 Jun 1986. Observers along the east coast of North America should bear in mind the likelihood of Audubon's Shearwater ranging northwards particularly in Gulf Stream waters.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*. TBH saw a single at 00°49'N 38°54'W on 15 Sep 85.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus l'herminieri*. RLW recorded a single in Mona Passage, Caribbean Sea on 28 Aug 86.

STORM-PETRELS *HYDROBATIDAE*

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. Off the east coast of the U.S.A. at 40°N 68½°W, KS saw two flocks each of 20 birds on 25 Apr 86. Phalaropes sp. and Northern Gannets were also seen. All disappeared when the ship entered the warm (20°C) waters of the Gulf Stream. Whilst steaming south along same coast he saw several small flocks between 33½°N 73°W and 23°N 74½°W from 9/11 May 86. (sea temp. range 24°/25°C). Also in the North Atlantic MGW had nine following for 30 min. at 43°21'N 43°39'W on 5 Aug 86.

White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina*. A single bird at 00°49'N 38°54'W on 15 Sep 85 (TBH) was described as being white below with white throat and lower face, and showing a rocking zig-zag flight just above the water. In the tropical Indian Ocean PM saw two at 13°44'S 91°26'E on 9 Aug 86.

Black-bellied and White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*, *Fregetta grallaria*. In the South Indian Ocean PWJ saw eight storm-petrels at 39°56'S 62°23'E on 17 Jul 86. He tentatively identified these as White-bellied, rather than Black-bellied on the basis of being unable to see the black breast/belly line. This feature is however often difficult to see, even from a small vessel with the observer close to sea level. On some *tropica* the dark line is faintly marked or even absent (Kinghorn, J. R. and Cayley, N. W. 1922; Murphy, R. C. and Snyder, J. P. 1952).

Leach's Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa.* In Gulf of St. Lawrence 56 miles NW Cape Ray MGW found a single bird on deck on 7 Aug 86. He also saw 25 at 45°N 48°20'W in the Grand Banks area on 5 Sep 86.

Tristram's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma tristrami.* PM recorded one off Kaohsiung on 18 Aug 86.

TROPIC BIRDS *PHAETHONTIDAE*

Red-billed Tropic bird *Phaethon aethereus.* On passage from Panama to Los Angeles KS saw two at 10°04'N 87°17'W off Costa Rica on 16 May 86.

Red-tailed Tropic bird *Phaethon rubricauda.* In the central tropical Pacific BB noted a single on 13 Jun, 4 on 26 Jun and 3 on 27 Jun 86. These birds always advertised their presence by calling and showed a distinct interest in the ship, flying close to, over and one even landed briefly on the fo'c'sle. BB observed that this behaviour contradicts the notes in Harrison (page 282) under the section FHJ.

White-tailed Tropic bird *Phaethon lepturus.* PM sighted a single of the race *P. l. fulvus* at 2°18'N 89°57'E on 11 Jun 86 (PM). In the Western North Atlantic CARB reported a single near the northern limit of its range at 32°12'N 63°51'W on 31 Aug 86.

PELICANS *PELECANIDAE*

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis.* Reported by CARB from the following localities: one at 24°49'N 80°09'W off Florida on 7 Sep 86, three off Key West on 8 Sep 86, five at 38°41'N 76°26'W in Chesapeake Bay on 16 Sep 86. In the Caribbean he saw 53 off Belize on 26 Sep 86. Later in the year he saw 12 at 17°22'N 60°44'W ENE from Antigua Island on 6 Dec 86.

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus.* In the bay of Izmir, Turkey two adults were seen by WW on 25 Sep 86.

GANNETS AND BOOBIES *SULIDAE*

Northern Gannet *Sula bassana.* Small flocks were seen at 46°30'N 52°30'W on 5 Sep and three at 50°30'N 11°30'W with whales at 9 Sep 86 (JWW). In the Mediterranean WW recorded the following: several immatures off Algiers on 24 Nov, several off Djamour and Cape Bon, Tunisia next day and four adults off Giglio and Elba on 30 Dec 86. Offshore near Sousse, Tunisia SEC saw two on 23 Dec 86.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra.* TBH saw a total of six, in the vicinity of Fernando de Noronha on 17 Sep 85, and RLW saw 12 in Mona Passage area on 28 Aug 86.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula.* TBH recorded a total of 70 in the vicinity of Fernando de Noronha on 17 Sep 85.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*. TBH saw a total of 12 in the vicinity of Fernando de Noronha on 17 Sep 85. In the Caribbean RLW saw seven in Mona Passage on 28 Aug 86. CARB had one at 19°31'N 82°20'W, four at 17°59'N 82°27'W on 24/25 Sep 86, and eight off Belize on 1 Oct.

FRIGATEBIRDS *FREGATIDAE*

Magnificent Frigate bird *Fregata magnificens*. Reported from the Caribbean area as follows: RLW saw five in Mona Passage on 28 Aug 86. CARB saw two off Key West on 11 Sep 86, one off Belize on 26 Sep 86 and eight at 17°22'N 60°44'W ENE Antigua Island on 6 Dec 86.

PHALAROPES *PHALAROPODIDAE*

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*. Several observations were made by PM as follows: 57 at 14°12'N 49°29'W on 5 May, 60 off Salalah on 6 May, 325 at 19°58'N 58°45'E on 7 May and 89 at 24°32'N 58°00'E on 9 May 86. In the Arabian Gulf DMS saw many small flocks totalling 400 birds around Saleh offshore oilfield 26°10'N 55°40'E on 13 May 86. His notes mention that most were already in summer plumage displaying orange colouring on the throat and sides of the neck. He surmises they were pausing during their migration flight before making the long journey to their northern breeding grounds.

Phalaropes sp. KS saw two flocks each of around 100 birds over cold water near boundary with the Gulf Stream at 40°N 68½°W on 25 Apr 86. Further offshore RLW reported five at 37°55'N 43°44'W on 1 Jan 85.

SKUAS *STERCORARIIDAE*

Great Skua *Catharacta skua*. There were several interesting records this year. In the Mediterranean, in the extreme NE corner at Iskenderun a single was seen by DMS on 7/8 Jan 86. This is well east of the bird's normal range. Further west in the Med PM reported a single at 37°07'N 11°10'E on 27 Apr 86. In the English Channel a single was seen off Cape Gris-nez by RLW on 13 Sep 86. JWW saw four some 15 miles south of Start Point on 16 Sep 86, and nine 25 miles south of Salcombe on 7 Oct 86. Off Scotland PWGC saw six at 60°57'N 01°45'W in Shetland area on 11 Sep 83, six at 58°38'N 2°55'W on 15 Sep and five at 57°54'N 2°26'W on 10 Aug 83. On 28 Oct 85 CARB saw a single at 35°56'N 6°20'W off Morocco. In the western North Atlantic JWW counted 20 in ½ hr on 21 Sep at 45°N 55½°W on Grand Banks in a productive area where fishing vessels were working and whales and dolphins were also seen. The next day the same observer counted 20 in ½ hr at 43°N 65½°W off Cape Sable. On 14 Sep 86 at 44°58'N 49°25'W on the Grand Banks, MGW saw a single Great Skua attack, and apparently kill, one of a flock of 45 Great Shearwaters. The skua settled by the downed shearwater but was not seen to feed, meanwhile the remaining Great Shearwaters circled around and mobbed the predator. A single was reported by CARB in the Caribbean off Belize on 1 Oct 86; it was seen to attack a gull.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*. Several reports from the NW European area and off South Africa. Of note was the observation by WW who saw four immatures south of Tarifa, Straits of Gibraltar on 9 Nov 86. One at 52°15'N 4°09'E on 28 Oct 86 (ARL). RJT recorded six light-phase birds at 34°05'S 151°10'E on 30 Mar 85 from the important wintering area for this species off eastern Australia.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*. On the edge of the Grand Banks at 43½°N 49½°W, JWW saw seven on 2 Oct 86. In the Mediterranean WW saw a small group off Malaga, Spain on 11 Oct 86.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*. In the mid-North Atlantic three were seen at 49½°N 27°W by JWW on 18 Sep 86. There have been a number of recent records of this Skua from Australia and New Zealand (Melville 1985). These records may reflect increased observer activity and competence rather than other factors. It is suggested that members should look carefully at all small skuas seen in the Australasian area bearing in mind they will be in various stages of moult and the central tail feathers will likely be missing or much shorter.

GULLS *LARIDAE*

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*. At Iskenderun Bay, Turkey from 16 Dec 85 to 9 Jan 86, DMS found the species to be common and numerous. Both pink-legged and yellow-legged birds were present.

California Gull *Larus californicus*. Seen by JWW during first few days of passage from Los Angeles to Tokyo including three adults at 37°22'N 124°30'W on 23 Feb 86 and 13 adults, two immatures at 40½°N 128½°W the next day.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*. DWS recorded many wintering at Iskenderun Bay, Turkey during his stay from 16 Dec 85 to 9 Jan 86.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*. Reported by CARB from several localities, two at 25°45'N 77°37'W on 6 Sep 86, four off Key West on 8 Sep 86 and 30 in Chesapeake Bay on 16 Sep 86.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*. MGW identified 12 in Cadiz Harbour on 31 Jul 86. In the Mediterranean DMS provided detailed description and sketch of a first winter bird seen at Iskenderen Bay Turkey on 29 Dec 85.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*. An adult in moult was seen by MGW at 40°N 26°12'W on 3 Aug 86. Several adults were seen by WW in southern Bay of Biscay on 11 Sep 86. Two off Cape Town on 28 Sep 85 (TBH). Four at 39°50'N 9°54'W on 22 Apr 86 (PM). A single bird circled ship for 2-3 minutes at 26°19'N 22°08'W on 30 May 86 (ARL).

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*. DMS spent four afternoons at Europa Point Gibraltar, and his efforts were rewarded with two

adults heading SSW towards Morocco on 26 Sep 86. He remarks that the main passage passed Gibraltar before his arrival, but stragglers occur until first week of October. He describes the birds' bill as 'stout with the basal 2/3 red and the other 1/3 black paling somewhat towards the tip'. The legs appeared dark grey. In size they were smaller than nearby Herring Gulls but much bigger and bulkier than Black-headed Gulls also present. Reported from the eastern Mediterranean by WW who saw one in Iskenderun Harbour on 25 Oct 86, several at Mersin anchorage the next day and one adult with two immatures in the Bay of Izmir on 25 Sep 86.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*. Winter records by DMS from Iskenderun Bay where he saw four on 6 Jan, one on 7 and four on 8 Jan 86.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei*. DMS saw a single adult at Sharjah, Arabian Gulf on 25 May 86.

Glaucous-winged Gull *Larus glaucescens*. On passage from Los Angeles to Kobe via Aleutians and Kuriles during Feb/March 86 JWW saw small numbers each day as far as the Kuriles, with maximum counts of 11 (9 ad. + 2 imm.) at 53½°N 175°E off the Aleutians on 2 Mar 86 and 11 the next day at 52°N 167½°E.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*
Photo: Captain S. Mayl, M.N.
(*Sea Swallow* Photo Competition 1986)

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*. In Gulf of St. Lawrence MGW reported two 50 miles SE Anticosti Island on 8 Aug 86. In the North Pacific off Hokkaido JWW saw two at 43½°N 147°E on 6 Mar 86 and one adult the next day at 38°N 143°E. He also saw an immature at 54½°N 172°W in the Bering Sea on 1 Mar 86.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*. At southern edge of the Grand Banks 30 were counted in ½ hour at 45°N 55½°W on 21 Sep 86 by JWW. The next day at 43°N 65½'W off Cape Sable he logged 35 in ½ hour. Both sightings were in productive areas where whales and dolphins were sighted and fishing vessels were working.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*. In mid-Atlantic at 44°10'N 28°30'W, KS recorded an adult and immature on 19 Apr 86. In the Mediterranean area DMS described a bird with very black upperwings and yellow legs seen amongst Herring Gulls at Iskenderun on 6 Jan 86. Both the nominate race *fuscus* and the greyer backed race *graellsii* were seen by WW in Straits of Gibraltar in small numbers on 3 and 27 Dec 85.

Slaty-backed Gull *Larus shistisagus*. In the western North Pacific small numbers were seen by JWW each day from 48°N 154°E on 5 Mar 86 until arrival at Kobe on 8 Mar 86.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. A single bird seen by DMS at Iskenderun Bay, Turkey on 6 Jan 86 was described in detail. In the western Med. WW reported several small groups at 36°10'N 3°40'W on 23 Nov 86. Following strong northerly winds SEC saw one imm. inshore at Sousse, Tunisia on 25 Dec 86. In the North Pacific it was seen by JWW: seven at 45°N 135°W on 25 Feb, two the next day at 49½°N 146½°W, four in Unimak Passage, Aleutians on 1 March and one later the same day at 54½°N 172°W in the Bering Sea, three at 53½°N 175°W on 2 Mar, a single at 49°N 157½°E on 5 Mar and 15 on 7 Mar at 40°N 144½°E when approaching Japan.

TERNS *STERNIDAE*

Black Tern *Childonias niger*. Several small groups were seen by WW in the Straits of Gibraltar on 13 Sep 86. The next day off the Algerian coast at 36°36'N 0°19'E he saw more small flocks.

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*. Off Antigua at 17°22'N, 60°44'W CARB saw six on 6 Dec 86.

Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*. DMS saw six at Sharjah, Arabian Gulf during May 86.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*. DMS saw six during a 4-hour watch at Europa Pt. Gibraltar on 26 Sep 86 and in the eastern Mediterranean he saw three fishing at Iskenderun Bay on 23 and 24 Dec 86. Other Mediterranean records are from WW who saw several at Annaba anchorage, Algeria 20/22 Jan 86, small groups at Skikda, Algeria 3/10 Feb 86, small groups at Port Said harbour on 19/20 Sep 86, and also in Turkey at Mersin and Izmir anchorages on 26 and 30 Oct 86. In the Caribbean TBH noted at least 1000 in position 10' south of Port Salut, Haiti, on 22 Jan 85 and commented on presence of sea areas disturbed by fish shoals.

South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea*. CARB, who was in the Falklands area during Nov 85, tentatively reported this species as follows: two at Mares Bay on 20, two at Saunders Island on 25, four in Falkland Sound on 25, and seven offshore on 26. Sightings of this species and the similar Arctic and Antarctic Terns in the Falklands area are discussed by Bourne and Curtis (1985).

Common/Arctic Tern *Sterna hirundo/paradisaea*. In mid-Atlantic at 39°37'N 22°W, 49 were reported by MGW on 20 Aug 86. Off South Africa at 35°S 19½°E, 200 in winter plumage were seen by RRW.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*. Small groups were seen by WW in Straits of Gibraltar and Port Said Harbour on 13 Sep and 19/20 Sep 86 respectively.

Saunder's Little Tern *Sterna saundersi*. In the period 2 to 31 May 86, DMS saw 12 at Sharjah Port, Arabian Gulf.

White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*. Seen at Sharjah, Arabian Gulf from 2 to 31 May 86, with a total of 40 birds counted by DMS.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*. DMS reported this species as the most common tern seen offshore from Sharjah, Arabian Gulf during May 86.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*. In the Caribbean area, RI W saw 70 feeding over a fish shoal when approaching Mona Passage on 5 Sep. In the Indian Ocean, RRW saw a flock of 100+ fishing at 12½°S 42.1°E on 28 Jan 86.

AUKS *ALCIDAE*

Brunnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia*. In the North Pacific off the Aleutians at 53½°N 175°E, JWW saw two closely on 2 Mar 86 and another the next day at 52°N 167½°E.

Little Auk *Alle alle*. Near Newfoundland 25 miles SE Grande Miquelon, MGW described 21 seen during a 2-hour period on 8 Jun 86.

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*. Small groups were seen by WW in the Straits of Gibraltar on 28 Dec 85 and off Aviles, N. Spain on 30 Dec 85. ARL noted two at 56°00'N 07°49'W and one at 52°10'N 03°20'E.

Horned Puffin *Fatercula corniculata*. JWW saw two at 39°N 180° on 13 Feb 86.

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LANDBIRDS FROM SHIPS AT SEA

Analysis by Commander M. B. Casement, O.B.E., Royal Navy

The following landbird report sheets were received during the last year. Extracts are shown in the appropriate geographical sections using the observer's initials.

Captain P. W. G. Chilman, M.N. (7)
M.V. *Tectus* - Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Pacific. Mar-Apr 1983.
M.V. *Donovania* - Baltic, N. Sea and E. Atlantic. Aug-Nov 1983.

Third Officer A. R. Louch, M.N. (13 + 1 BEH form)
R.R.S. *Frederick Russell* - E. Atlantic and N. Sea. Sep-Nov 1986.
R.R.S. *Discovery* - N.E. Atlantic. May-July 1986, and south Indian Ocean. Jan 1987.
R.R.S. *Challenger* - N. Atlantic and North Sea. 26 Jun-19 Jul 1987.

Chief Officer P. C. Dyer, M.N. (6)
M.V. *Norwich Service* - North Sea, Shell Sean Field. 20 Sep-18 Oct 1985.
M.V. *Shetland Service* - 7-24 April 1987.

Chief Petty Officer C. A. R. Bailey, R.N. (4 + photos)
H.M.S. *Sirius* - Portsmouth to Gib. Oct 1985 and West Atlantic, 7 Sep-15 Oct 1986.

Captain R. L. Westwater, M.N. (6 sheets, 3 BEH forms + several photos)
M.V. *Irma M* - N. Atlantic, Caribbean. 1 Jul-31 Oct 1986.

Captain K. Salwegter, M.N. (1)
M.V. *Amstelvoorn* - N. Atlantic. 4-10 Sep 1986.

Captain D. M. Simpson, M.N. (one page of notes)
M.V. *Bigorange XI* and *Bigorange XV* - Persian Gulf. May 1986-Mar 1987.

Mr P. W. Jackson, M.N. (4)
M.V. *Liverpool Star* - N. Atlantic, Med. 12 Mar-1 May 1987.

Chief Officer M. G. Weir, M.N. (5)
M.V. *San Lorenzo* - N. Atlantic, Med. Jun-Sep 1986.
M.V. *Canmar Venture* - N. Atlantic. Nov 1986.

Radio Officer W. Weitkowitz, M.N. (11)
M.V. *Kalymnos* - E. Atlantic and Med. 11 Sep-28 Nov 1986.

Mr B. Grandin, M.N. (2)
M.V. *Falstaff SLCO* - N. Atlantic. 16-25 May and N. Pacific 7 Jun 1986.

Captain J. W. Welch, M.N. (4 + 1 BEH form)
M.V. *Strathconon* - W. Atlantic. 30 Sep-5 Oct 1986 and 23-25 Apr 1987.

Note. 1987 observations from the above records have been held over for next year and will be published in *Sea Swallow* 37.

1983

When anchored in Liverpool Bay 0200-0600 on 9 Oct. PWGC counted at least 50 Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* aboard and several Song Thrushes *Turdus philomelos*. The wind was W/3 and most birds left at daylight.

1985

On 12 Oct M.V. *Romney* (Met) reported a House Martin *Delichon urbica* in position 10°33'N 26°09'W, 250nm SSW Cape Verde Is.

On 15 Oct CARB recorded a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and a Goldcrest (F) on board in position 47°50'N 7°39'W - 150nm WSW Ushant.

1986

A Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (M) was reported by M.V. *Brora Universal* (Met) on 9 Apr 20nm NW C. Finisterre.

On 23 April M.V. *Remuera Bay* (Met) reported 3 small swift *Apus* sp. 70nm NW Morocco (and 70nm south Canary Is).

BG reported a Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* and a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* 220nm W Ushant on 16 May.

A Merlin *Falco columbarius* was reported by M.V. *Arthur* (Met) on 18 May at 46°56'N 17°17'W - 440nm NW C. Finisterre and 420nm SW C. Clear (SW Ireland).

On 16 May ARL recorded late migrants in west Bay of Biscay, 175nm WSW Pta du Raz, including Blackcap, House Martin, Turtle Dove and Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (3). Whilst operating in an area SW Madeira in late May he recorded further hirundines far from land:

A single Swallow on 31 May in position 26°12'N 23°21'W, 315nm SW Hiero, Canaries, 450nm NW African coast, and single House Martins on 26 May in position 29°57'N 20°00'W 120nm NW Palma, Canaries, on 30 May 190nm WSW Hiero, and on 4 Jun in position 26°10N 33°39'W (720nm NW Cape Verde Is). On 2 Jul he saw another 300nm WNW Panama which alighted on board but did not appear unduly exhausted: the wind was NE force 4 with excellent visibility. Another was sighted but did not alight on 12 Jul in position 31°30'N 24°27'W - 380nm SSW Madeira.

Yet other examples were a single Swift *Apus apus* recorded by M.V. *Apapa Palm* (Met) on 28 May in position 34°N 12°W (170nm NW Morocco), and five House Martins 100nm NNE Canaries, and single Swifts 85nm west Spanish Sahara on 4 Jun 100nm west of Mauretania reported by M.V. *Mairangi Bay* (Met). Two House Martins were briefly aboard M.V. *La Borde* (Met) on 4 Jun 300nm NE Azores.

When passing close south of Tenerife on 30 May ARL noted a falcon seen briefly and thought to be a Lanner *Falco biarmicus*.

On 31 May M.V. *Bora Universal* (Met) recorded a Swallow at 40°25'N 25°50'W - 120nm NNE Terceira, Azores, and on 1 Jun two House Martins in position 520nm WSW Azores. The martins were still around on 2 Jun finally disappearing about noon in position 32°41'N 42°07'W, 720nm SW Azores, having been carried 300nm in the "wrong" direction (240°).

On 1 Jun a Swallow was reported by M.V. *Pacific Prestige* (Met) in mid-Atlantic at 44°N 28°40'W (260nm NNE Flores, Azores), and spent the night roosting in a pigeon-hole in the flag locker. On 2 Jun a "hawk" was seen circling and eventually settled board where it remained for 3 days. Attempts were made to feed it with raw meat but it grew weaker and was found dead on 5th, when only 150nm SW from Cornwall. Photographs showed it to be a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (M).

On 2 Jun MGW recorded a House Martin, and a possible Melodius Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* 100nm WSW Cape St. Vincent.

On 5 Sep a Hoope *Upupa epops* was reported by M.V. *Craiglas* (Met) 70nm E Cape Verde Is.

WW recorded a Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, several Turtle Doves and Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striatus* in the Gulf of Cadiz on 13 Sep.

MGW saw a Hoopoe in position 37°40'N 11°35'W, 110nm WNW C. St. Vincent on 19 Sep, and later on the same day a possible Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* and a pipit thought possibly to be a Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* which was found but evaded capture in the engine-room workshop: the weather was fine with wind SE/3, and the ship was then 35nm SWS C. St. Vincent.

ARL saw a Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* on 25 Sep in position 56°N 07°50'W (40nm NW Ireland) being mobbed by Kittiwakes.

RLW recorded four Nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos* and two Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striatus* on 20 Sep 245nm SW Bishop Rock; winds were ESE/4.

On 6 Oct WW identified a Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* in south Biscay, and on 14 Oct in N. Biscay, noted two adult Black Redstarts *Phoenicuros ochruros* (1M, 1F).

A probable White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* was seen flying around M.V. *Craiglas* (Met) on 14 Oct in position 20°39'N 22°48'W, 300nm west Cape Blanco, Mauretania.

SECTION B — ENGLISH CHANNEL, NORTH SEA AND BALTIC

1983

PWGC recorded many sightings of Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* during the period 9-24 August including 9th (1F 85nm E. Scotland, and later two more 15nm N. Macduff), 10th (1F), 19th (1-2F), 21st (at least 4), 22nd (9+) and 24th (2). Other species off Macduff were Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* one on 10th, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* 19th (1), Redshank *Tringa totanus* 21st (2), and Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* 21st (1). A Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* was seen on 14th 100nm SE Sumburgh Head, Shetland on 14th, and a Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima* 110nm WSW Norway on 24th.

During the period 27 Aug-5 Sep, PWGC recorded the following species in the Baltic:

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* on 27th (1M), Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* on 27th and 31st, Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava* on 27th (2), 31st (15+ close west of Bornholm) and 31st (2 in Great Belt), and White Wagtail *M. alba* on 31st (2).

On 12 Sep PWGC saw about 80 Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* flying S in position 58°17'N 05°20'E, (20nm SW Norway), and also three probable Garden Warbler on board: the wind was NNE/4. On 15 Sep, when 30nm east of Wick, Scotland, PWGC noted Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (1F), Pied Wagtail (2), Blue-headed Wagtail (1), Redstart (2F), Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (1F) and Meadow Pipit (1). On 17 Sep he noted White Wagtail (2), Dunlin *Calidris alpina* (3), and a Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii* aboard in position 57°54'N 03°35'E (75nm SW Norway).

Further migrants of interest am. on 1 Oct were noted aboard in position 56°N 00°30'E (80nm ENE Northumberland): Blackcap (3M, 3F), Willow Warbler *P. trochilus* (2), Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* (4F or juv), prob. Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (at least 3), Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* (12+), Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (2), Song Thrush *Turdus philomenus* (18), Redwing *Turdus iliacus* (3), and a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* flying westwards. Later in the day, when 90nm SE Scotland he saw on board Rock Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* (1), Redstart (1), Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, and flying SSW two Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (2M). The weather throughout was cloudy with wind SE force 7. A Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* was skulking aboard on 2 Oct when 11nm north of Unst, Shetland, together with a Golden Plover and at least one Robin. A single Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* flew past heading SW on 3 Oct.

On 5 Nov, when passing NE 10nm west of Texel, PWGC noted a Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* aboard, also Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (c10), Blackbird (1M), and Redwing, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* (4), and Song Thrush were seen flying east on 8 Nov when passing through the Great Belts. On 9 Nov he was in position 58°34'N 04°41'E, 27nm west of Norway, and saw 26 Starlings flying south, and Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* (3M) heading east.

1985

PCD reported the following species, some of which he photographed, during the period 20 Sep-18 Oct whilst operating in an area 50nm NE Norfolk coast:

Goldcrest 20 Sep (1 very tired), 23 Sep (1), 18 Oct (1).
Willow Warbler 24 Sep (1).
Redstart 24 Sep (1F).
Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* 25 Sep (1), 13 Oct (3), 14 Oct (5).
Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* 18 Oct (3).
Knot *Calidris canutus* 18 Oct (1).

1986

On 19 Apr M.V. *Matco Thames* (Met) recorded a total of seven owls on board in position 59°24'N 01°15'E 80nm SE Shetland. They were identified as Long-eared *Asio otus*, but Short-eared Owl seems more likely. They first appeared during the forenoon and stayed around the vessel most of the day before disappearing by the evening. The weather was fine with light SE winds and scattered cloud. M.V. *Matco Clyde* (Met) also reported a single short-eared Owl in the same area on 21 April, about 30 Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* perched in the rigging, and several reported as "jackdaws" and "sparrows".

On 23 April an almost certain Long-eared Owl was aboard M.V. *Lackenby* (Met) for 2-3 hours in position 60°N 0°20'W - 30nm E Shetlands.

ARL was operating off Scheveningen during the period 12 Oct-20 Nov when he noted 19 species of migrants including Robin, Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (3 on 12th when close to land), Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, Blackcap, Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Chaffinch, Redwing, Fieldfare, Blackbird, Long-eared Owl and Woodcock (on 20 Nov). On 3 Nov two groups of Common Scoter (22 and 3) were seen flying SW.

SECTION C — WEST ATLANTIC (WEST OF 30°W)

1986

On 13 May a group of 8 landbirds landed aboard M.V. *E. W. Beatty* (Met) in position 37°47'N 59°45'W - 420nm SE C. Sable, Newfoundland and 420nm NNE Bermuda. The number later increased to 20, and from sketches made were later identified as Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* and a probable Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*. These had clearly been driven eastwards by strong NW gale force 8, reducing to force 6.

On 8 Jun MGW recorded a Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* in Cabot Strait, 35nm east Cape Race, Newfoundland.

On 7 Aug MGW noted three Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis* aboard for 2 hours in position 46°30'N 58°30'W, 60 nm SE Cape Ray, and in the same position next day, three probable Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*.

M.V. *Ravenscraig* (Met) reported, and photographed a juvenile Merlin preying on smaller migrants aboard on 6 Sep in position 40°N 59°40'W, 300 nm SE Nova Scotia. A second juvenile appeared late morning, and both disappeared at 1400. Another bird of prey, probably a female Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, am on 14 Sep in position 340nm S. Cape Race, and tried several times to catch a small bird. It was last seen at dusk.

Another probable Merlin was sighted aboard M.V. *Sycee* (Met) on 9 Sep 270nm SE C. Race.

M.V. London Spirit (Met) recorded a Merlin *Falco columbarius* in position 29°50'N 71°10'W on 22 Sep, which caught and ate another hitch-hiker, an Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*.

JWW reported an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* and a small hawk, possibly a Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus* on board on 30 Sep when 30nm east of Nantucket. The hawk was seen to catch and eat a small black and white bird, and was still aboard on 2 Oct when 240nm SE Cape Race.

On 5 Oct a bird of prey, which was probably a Merlin, was first sighted aboard M.V. *W. M. Neal* (Met) in position 40°34'N 49°04'W, 450nm SSE C.Race. It was seen again next day devouring a large unidentified black bird and spent the night perched on an aerial mast. It declined raw meat offered it on 7th, and finally departed, possibly to another passing vessel pm on 7th in position 35°29'N 42°15'W, 750nm SW Azores having hitch-hiked 550nm on a course of 130°.

M.V. *Sycee* (Met) reported an Osprey 440nm SE Cape Cod on 6 Oct, and four probable Mourning Doves *Zenaida macroura*, and several "sparrow" type birds aboard on 7 Oct when 270nm SE C.Hatteras.

A juvenile Swallow was sighted aboard M.V. *Ormond* (Met) on 16 Oct in position 9°N 34°35'W, 500nm SW C. Verde and 700nm NE Brazil.

A juvenile Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* was identified by MGW on 26 Nov in position 46°N 49°30'W, 190nm ESE Cape Race. The wind was NW force 8 and it appeared healthy and strong; it remained aboard for about an hour.

RLW examined and photographed a Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* on 6 Oct in position 30°N 50°W (900nm ESE Bermuda), and on 31 Oct also photographed on board a Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* 115nm NNE Puerto Rico (see photo).

SECTION D — GULF OF MEXICO AND CARIBBEAN

1986

A Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* was recorded by BG on 25 May in position 24°52'N 84°25'W, 140nm W. Florida.

M.V. *London Spirit* (Met) reported a Purple Gallinule *Porphyrula martinica* which first came aboard on 15 June, one day after leaving the Mississippi Delta. It was seen wading in puddles of water on the deck attempting to feed, but after several days it was caught and put in a spare bathroom with fresh water and food but it refused to eat. On arrival at Amuay Bay on 19th it was decided to release it, but it circled to gain height and hit the main mast; it fell to the deck and was found to be dead.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*
Photo: Captain R. L. Westwater, M.N.

A Short-eared *Owl Asio flammeus* was photographed by M.T. *London Spirit* (Met) which came aboard in the approaches to the Mississippi River on 15 Jul.

CARB reported American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* (1M, 1F) which settled on board on 21 Sep in position 20°45'N 72°04'W (53nm NE Tortuga Is.), and on 23 Sep photographed a Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* in position 19°30'N 82°20'W, 50nm west of Grand Cayman Is. which remained aboard all day, and a female American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*.

RLW identified an Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* and a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* 95nm SW Beata Is. (Haiti) on 27 Sep.

On 28 Sep RLW recorded a number of migrants aboard in the central Caribbean (165nm NE Venezuela) including American Redstart (2M, 1F), Black-and-white Warbler and a probable Black-throated Green Warbler *Dendroica virens* which was found dead and photographed.

A probable Peregrine came aboard M.V. *Pacific Teal* (Met) at 1500 on 19 Oct when 60nm S. Haiti and was seen swooping above small shoals of flying fish, but without apparent success in catching any. This bird was thought to be an immature, and after circling for about 40 mins it departed heading towards Dominica. Shortly afterwards two similar birds appeared and remained until dusk; on several occasions they were seen to catch and eat small finch-like birds. At sunrise next day both appeared to have departed, but later a single bird of similar description was seen attacking small birds. On the morning of 21st, when nearing the Panamanian coast, a much smaller bird of prey, probably a Merlin *Falco columbarius* was observed chasing "swifts" and other small birds.

On 23 Oct RLW saw a Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolensis* when 25nm south of Jamaica, and on 28 Oct examined a Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* which came aboard at Almirante and departed on 31st when passing Mona Is.

SECTION E — MEDITERRANEAN (AND BLACK SEA)

1986

Four Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* landed aboard M.V. *El Gurdabia* (Met) 100nm SE Malta at twilight on 17 Mar, and a group of about 15 others flew over the vessel heading northwards at 0800Z on the same day.

M.V. *British Kennet* (Met) was en route to Tuapse, U.S.S.R. in the Black Sea on 12/13 May when a total of six unidentified owls were noted around the ship over a period of two days, also a large number of "sparrows", "pigeons", "crows", a "hawk" and a "heron". During the evening the whole mainmast and aerials were littered with roosting Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, but these had disappeared by next morning.

On 1 July MGW recorded a Swift *Apus apus* circling the ship in position 42°15'N 5°16'E, 70nm south of Provence, and on 29 Aug three Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* were aboard for 3 hours in position 45nm SE Barcelona.

WW saw two Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* in the western Med. on 14 Sep, and in the eastern Med, 60nm north of Alexandria on 18th recorded a Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* and two Willow Warblers *P. trochilus* and a Blue-headed Wagtail *Motacilla flava*.

MGW identified a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* on 23 Sep feeding on flies attracted to the deck cargo of cowhides when 25nm N Elba.

DMS observed a flight of 8 Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* whilst ashore at Europa Point, Gibraltar on 26 Sep; the weather was fine with a strong easterly breeze and they flew past low over the sea heading SW.

WW recorded a juvenile Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* in the Ionian Sea on 29 Sep, which settled on board for 10 mins before departing southwards; also aboard was a Wheatear and a Robin *Erithacus rubecula*. On 1 Oct, when passing south of Sardinia he identified a Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, several Redstarts *P. phoenicurus* (M and F), several Robins and a Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*. A single Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and several Robins were again seen on 2 Oct in the western Med when passing Cabrera Is.

M.V. *Stolt Stane* (Met) was on passage in the Black Sea from Bosphorus to Batumi (USSR) 13-15 Oct and recorded a spectacular "fall" of birds, including a high number and variety of owls. A few began to arrive in the afternoon of 14th in position 41°58'N 32°18'E, and numbers built up during the night until 0600 on 15th about 350 were either on board or circling the ship. At one stage there were 10 Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* perched on the ship's rail. Other species identified were Little Owls *Athene noctua*, Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus*, Barn Owls *Tyto alba*, Robins, Linnets, Turtle Doves, Swallows, Herons (sp. nk), Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla*, Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs*, and Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*. The ship's course was 096°, and the weather at the time was initially clear skies becoming heavily overcast with light NE winds, but on the previous day there had been force 7/8 winds from NE.

On another voyage travelling eastwards through the Mediterranean on 17 Oct WW recorded numerous species which included a Cornerake *Crex crex*, Black Redstart, White Wagtail *M. alba*, Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis* in the western Med (40nm ENE Alboran). Next day, when 30nm north of Algeria, a White Wagtail, two Black Redstarts *P. ochruros* (1M and 1F), a Robin, a Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*, a Chaffinch, and a Starling were sighted. Further migrants were sighted on passing "the narrows" off Malta, including Swallow, Black Redstart, Chaffinch and Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, and in the eastern Mediterranean, north of Alexandria on 23rd, White Wagtails (3), Chaffinch, and a party of six Spanish Sparrows (2M, 6F). New species noted off Latakia (Syria) on 24th were Spur-winged Plover *Hoplopterus spinosus* (1) and Linnet *Acanthis cannabina* (1F), also at least 10 Spanish Sparrows, including several adult males. Returning through the Aegean, WW saw a Song Thrush *Turdus philmoenus* off Izmir (Turkey) on 30 Oct, and a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and several small groups of Black Redstarts and Robins SE Greece (Peloponnesus) on 2 Nov. Migration was still continuing on 7 Nov in the western Mediterranean with further Robins (2), a White Wagtail, and a Blackbird *Turdus merula* 10nm S. France (Provence).

SECTION F — RED SEA AND GULF OF ADEN

1986

On 22 Mar M.V. *Bora Universal* (Met) recorded a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* aboard.

On 8 May Able Seaman (EW) S.M.A. Ball of H.M.S. *Southampton* photographed a Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* which settled on the superstructure in the southern Red Sea. It remained for a couple of hours and appeared to be panting and suffering from the intense heat.

S.S. *Flinders Bay* (Met) passing south through the Red Sea noted a Hoopoe at Suez on 19 Sep, a probable Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* on 21st, and a Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* on 22nd.

A Nightjar *Caprimulgus* sp. was caught and photographed by M.V. *Tokyo Bay* (Met) in north Red Sea on 6 Oct.

A very large owl (with wing-span about 4-5 ft.), which from its description was probably an Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, was recorded by M.V. *La Pampa* (Met) flying round the ship 0500 until about 0600 on 17 Nov in the Gulf of Aden. It appeared to prey on small birds also on board, including several which were probably wheatears *Oenanthe* sp.

SECTION G — INDIAN OCEAN AND ARABIAN SEA

1985

On 11 Oct M.V. *Barber Perseus* (Met) reported a probable juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* which landed on board in position 13°209N 73°E, 30nm east of Laccadive Is.

1986

On 13 Feb M.V. *Nosira Madeleine* (Met) recorded two Swallows *Hirundo rustica* on board when passing through the Mozambique Channel (14°18′S 43°16′E). One had a blue plastic ring on its right leg.

A Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* landed aboard M.V. *Tor Bay* (Met) on 30 Sep in position 16°08′N 69°50′E, 200nm west of India.

M.V. *Toana Niugini* (Met) noted a probable Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* when 100nm south of Sri Lanka on 14 Oct.

At 1545 on 2 Nov M.V. *Cardigan Bay* (Met) reported a probable Kestrel which was first seen on board in position 9°44′N 64°55′E, 600nm west of Laccadive Is and 700nm SE Arabia. The ship had passed 60nm south of Socotra on the previous day, and the wind was north force 2/3, backing westerly. The falcon remained on board, usually perched on the signal mast, for 3½ days, and was last seen on 4th when 13 miles off Sri Lanka.

A probable juvenile Hobby *F. subbuteo* was observed on board M.V. *Mather* (Met) on 5 Nov in position 18°11′N 67°27′E, 289nm SW India.

Another bird of prey, probably a Kestrel, landed briefly aboard M.V. *Kowloon Bay* (Met) on 15 Nov when 200nm SE Socotra.

SECTION H — PERSIAN GULF AND GULF OF OMAN

1986

DMS recorded a number of interesting observations including Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* on 4 May and 14 May (possibly the same bird) on the oil-drilling rig *Bonito 11* in position 26°12′N 55°44′E and a female aboard ship in position 25°33′N 54°44′E on 27 Oct; on 28 Oct a flight of 9 probable Marbled Teal *Anas angustirostris* passed by heading NW in position 25°29′N 54°47′E. He noted an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* in a similar position on 14 Nov. The highlight for DMS was the sighting of two single Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata*, one on 17 Nov, and a second on 27 Nov which circled the ship twice before heading off SW, in position 25°31′N 54°20′E.

SECTION I — PACIFIC, CHINA SEA, YELLOW SEA, CORAL SEA AND PHILIPPINE SEA

1983

On 28 Mar PWGC recorded a probable Collared Kingfisher *Halcyon chloris* a long way from land which settled briefly on board in position 13°02′S 108°50′E, 236nm ESE Christmas Is, several Swallows *Hirundo rustica* on 30 Mar and 4 Apr, in Java Sea and Philippine Sea respectively, and a Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus* 170nm SE Miyako Shima, 290nm E by S Taiwan, on 6 Apr. Another Green-backed Heron was aboard the ship on 7 Apr in position 26°46′N 126°42′E, together with two Swallows and an unidentified Redstart sp.

1985

A remarkable record of a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* was reported by M.V. *Main Express* (Met) (see photograph) in the central North Pacific on 19 October in position 35°47′N 168°24′W - 650nm north of Sandwich Islands. It was thought to have arrived sometime the previous evening and left during the night 19/20th. At no time since leaving Long Beach, Ca., U.S.A. had the ship passed closer than 600nm to land (Midway Is). The predominant wind was easterly force 5.

Two more Short-eared Owls were recorded by M.V. *Barber Perseus* (Met), the first of which appeared early on 3 Nov in position 35°48′N 162°15′E, 900nm SE Kuril Is. It remained until 5th when a second owl joined the ship. This was seen to chase a small bird.

Short-eared Owl *Asio otus* aboard
M.V. *Main Express*
Photo: T. Vaughan
(reproduced by kind permission of the Editor *Marine Observer*)

1986

A probable Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* was noted aboard M.V. *Benalder* (Met) off the Nicobar Is (6°N 95°E) on 7 March.

A Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* was reported by M.V. *Osaka Bay* (Met) on 23 March at 29°11'N 124°17'E - 40nm east of Chusan Is (China).

A probable Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* was recorded by M.V. *London Spirit* (Met) 100nm off the coast of Columbia at 5°16'N 79°35'W on 29 April, and BG identified a Canada Warbler *Wilsonia canadensis* resting on the bridge wing for several hours on 7 June when 25nm W San Diego, Ca.

A Blue-winged Pitta *Pitta moluccensis* was found dead aboard M.V. *Osaka Bay* (Met) on 7 Oct while transitting the Malacca Strait.

On 31 Oct M.V. *Pacific Teal* (Met) recorded a Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* which settled on board in position 19°30'N 130°20'W, 900nm west of California: the wind was NE force 6 at the time. It was seen to feed on a storm-petrel. Later that day another similar falcon, possibly a female due to its slightly larger size, was seen circling the ship and chasing storm-petrels. It did not land on board and the first falcon took little notice of it. The "resident" bird was still aboard looking well fed and healthy. Its normal perch was beneath the SATCOM dome and it was seen to prey exclusively on storm-petrels with about three meals a day. It disappeared sometime during the night of 4th/5th and was presumed to have either transferred to another vessel, or headed for the nearest land, the Hawaiian Islands then 220nm WNW. The bird had been carried over 1000nm in a WNW direction. Several species of small birds arrived on board on 17 Nov when 450nm SE Taiwan; from the descriptions one of these was probably a Siberian Meadow Bunting *Emberiza cioides*, and another which was caught and photographed is thought to have been a female Siberian Thrush *Turdus siberius*.

A group of five probable Cattle Egrets was reported by M.V. *Melampus* (Met) to land on board on 6 Nov in position 06°07'N 119°08'W, 1200nm SW Mexico. They were joined by two more on 7th and all remained sheltering from wind and rain until they disappeared sometime on 12th when 420nm SE Hawaii; they had been carried over 2000nm on a course of 295°.

M.V. *Liverool Bay* (Met) recorded and photographed a Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* found dead on board when approaching the Malacca Straits on 19 Nov; it may have been dead for some time.

1983

PWGC recorded an egret on 4 March which landed aboard in position 32°20'S 20°10'W, 1250nm SE C. Frio, Brazil. Pure white with orange bill, grey legs and feet, and medium size, he thought it was rather small for an American Egret *Egretta alba*. Winds previously had been NE/3, weather fine. It remained for 4½ hours and departed S.

1985

On 18th March Leading Seaman D. C. Martin photographed a Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* aboard H.M. Submarine *Opportune* in approximate position 20°S 22°W. This is 850nm SW Ascension, 420nm E Trinidad Is and over 1000nm E Brazil. The weather at the time was clear and calm, and the suggestion is that it may have been blown initially out to sea by a local storm off the coast of South America (see Frontispiece, page 1).

1986

There were fewer reports from Falkland waters this year, but I was very pleased to note in *Warrah* 1986, the Annual report of the Falklands Island Trust, that a number of R.N.B.W.S. members had contributed observations to this; chief among these were Bill Bourne, Bill Curtis, and Bill Bewsher. In the autumn of 1986 there was the largest ever recorded invasion of Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*. Andy Douse states (page 10) that the total numbers probably exceeded 5,000 with three distinct periods: mid-March, mid-April when at least 3,000 were seen, and mid-May.

Two Cattle Egrets were recorded by M.V. *Act 7* (Met) on 14 March in position 44°06'S 51°00'W - 350nm NE Falklands and 580nm SE Argentina.

M.V. *Bora Universal* (Met) reported a Roller, probably a Rufous-crowned Roller *Coracias naevia*, which arrived on board on 12 April in position 22°04'S 8°06'E - 300nm WSW African mainland. It remained 20 mins and flew off in a westerly direction!

At 0900Z on 22 April a Cattle Egret overtook the ship from astern and landed clumsily aboard M.V. *Ravenscraig* (Met) in position 39°50'S 9°30'E - 500nm SW Cape of Good Hope. At 1230 it was joined by a second and both remained until early a.m. on 23rd.

A probable Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* was noted aboard M.V. *Benalder* (Met) off the Nicobar Is (6°N 95°E) on 7 March.

M.B.C.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*. May 1986.
100 miles N. Darwin Australia
Photo: Captain [illegible], M.N.
(*Sea Swallow* Photo Competition 1986)

J.W. Gurton

LANDBIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1986

By Commander M. B. Casement, O.B.E., Royal Navy

Records from or near Station Lima (57°N 20°W 210nm WSW Rockall, 459nm S. Iceland) were received from R. C. L Aran and Met. Staff of O.W.S. *Cumulus*, and cover the following periods:

27 Apr-12 May, 17 May, 8 Jul, 15 Aug-10 Sep, 26 Sep-16 Oct and 27 Oct-9 Nov.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus*. On 16 Oct one attempted to alight on the foremast in wind force 7-8 but crashed down onto fo'c'sle. It took flight when disturbed, as food was put down, and crashed into sea. Twice it took off from the water, but finally fell back; mobbed by Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*.

Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*. One aboard until late evening on 3 Oct. One probable briefly aboard on 7 Oct.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. Two flying NNW on 7 May, but did not alight. Three aboard on 8 May; seen to take breadcrumbs. One died 10th, but others still aboard 14th.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*. Two aboard 8 May, one prob. flying alongside ship on 21 Aug.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*. One arrived pm 8 May and departed 11th.

Rock Dove *Columbia livia*. One aboard 3 Oct and departed after dark.

House Martin *Delichon urbica*. One aboard 17 May; wind 040 force 5.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*. One found inside oceanographic laboratory 10 Sep; wind 040/5kts.

Meadow Pipit *A. pratensis*. One aboard 7 May (died pm), 8 May (3), 12 May (2), 8 Sep (one very weak and cold, died 9th).

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*. Two arrived am 7 May (dep. pm). One on 9 May (died pm), 10 May (one aboard until 11th), 12 May (2 aboard briefly), one on 31 Aug (died 1 Sep).

Icterine Warbler? *Hippolais icterina*. One possible found in Radio Room on 10 Sep; pecked at R.O.'s cup of coffee and sandwich. Left after 3 hours.

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*. One on 8 May; caught and released.

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*. Singles on 27 Apr, 1, 6 and 8 May, 8 Jul (one prob. flying NW), 15 and 24 Aug, 8 and 26 Sep, 4 and 27 Oct.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*. Singles on 6 and 7 May, and 9 Nov.

SEABIRD REPORTS FROM OCEAN WEATHERSHIP STATION LIMA, 1986

By Captain P. W. G. Chilman, M.N.

The format of the summary table remains as in previous years.

The periods of observation are not continuous but have increased to 286 days this year — all from O.W.S. *Cumulus* which is now under the British flag.

Daily counts include a total of 10,176 Fulmars (of which 33 were blue phase), 129 Gannets (63 immatures), 7 Herring Gulls (2), 629 Lesser Black-backed Gulls (177), 441 Great Black-backed Gulls (318), 7 Glaucous Gulls (2), and 11,200 Kittiwakes (3,958).

Wilson's Storm-petrel, Razorbill and Puffin are reported after being absent f - several years. Species reported in previous years but not sighted this year are Cory's Shearwater, Little Shearwater, Iceland Gull and Sandwich Tern.

Recorded Kittiwake numbers have again increased: an average of over 100 per day for a month has been recorded for the first time — actually 137 per day in April.

Further to the figures on Manx Shearwater noted in *Sea Swallow* 35:38-9, the figure for October 1986 was 15, the largest group being 3.

Three birds were reported as oiled this year.

The R.N.B.W.S. continues to be greatly indebted to all those of the Met. Office staff who have contributed to these valuable and unique observations.

Captain P. W. G. Chilman, M.N., 15 Garbett Way, Bishopthorpe, York, YO2 1SF.

OCEAN WEATHER SHIP OBSERVATIONS
SUMMARY OF SEABIRD SIGHTINGS, STATION LIMA (57°N 20°W)

Month 1986	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Observation Days (Total 286)	23	22	23	25	26	27	26	17	23	25	23	26
Fulmar	×	o	o	o	o	o	o	×	o	o	o	o
Great Shearwater							—	—	—	—		
Sooty Shearwater							—	+	+	—		
Manx Shearwater						—	—	—	+	—		
Wilson's Storm-petrel							—					
British Storm-petrel			—					—	—	—		
Leach's Storm-petrel											—	
Gannet	—	—	—	—	—	+	—	+	—	—		
Great Skua			—	—	—	+	—	+	+	—		
Pomarine Skua					—	—	—	—	—	—		
Arctic Skua					—	—	—	—	—			
Long-tailed Skua					—	—	—	—	—			
Herring Gull		—			—				—	—		
Lesser Black-backed Gull	—	—	—	+	+	+	—	o	+	—		
Great Black-backed Gull	—	—		—	+	—		+	+	—	+	
Glaucous Gull										—	—	
Kittiwake	o	o	×	×	×	o	+	o	o	o	o	o
Black-headed Gull				—	—		—			—		
Arctic Tern								+				
Common Tern						—	+	+	—			
Little Auk				—		—				—		
Guillemot						—	—					
Razorbill					—		—					
Puffin						—	—					

Key — Occasional sightings o Average 10-49 per day
+ Average 1-9 per day × Average 50 or more per day

NEW AND UNUSUAL SEABIRD RECORDS SUMMARISED FROM RECENT LITERATURE

By S. E. Chapman

In common with previous annual summaries this paper aims to present observations which add significantly to our distribution knowledge of seabirds. I am again indebted to Captain N. G. Cheshire for extracts from the Australian journals which I would not otherwise see.

Nearer home, but not included in the following notes, and worthy of remark is the publication by the Laboratoire de Zoologie de la Faculte des Sciences de Brest of detailed distribution and density maps of wintering birds in Brittany over the period 1977-1981. These maps are the results of a massive effort and also include coastwise seabird distributions which will provide a useful bench mark for future studies. Full details may be found in *Ar Vran* 1986 XII (3).

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*. Arguably neither new nor unusual, but surely worthy of comment, is the single bird that has now (1985) summered in Shetland with breeding Gannets for the fourteenth year. M. J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee, 1986. *Brit. Birds* 79:526-588.

Providence Petrel *Pterodroma solandri*. Second New Zealand record; a beached bird, September 1984. P. Miller, 1986. *Notornis* 33:76. An estimated 20 birds found breeding on Phillip Island, 2 miles off Norfolk Island, the first breeding record here since the species was exterminated in the late 18th century. N. Hermes, O. Evans and B. Evans, 1986. *Notornis* 33:141-149.

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*. A first record for Queensland, Australia at Maryborough, 25°31'S 152°37'E in April 1984. T. Pallister, 1986. *Sunbird* 15:45-70.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*. A single bird sighted at 4°49'N 51°40'W, off the coast of French Guiana, on 9 July 1986 is a new species for the list of this country. O. Tostain, 1987. *L'Oiseau et R.F.O.* 57:45-6.

Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax*. A second record for Kenya captured alive on 9 December 1985 at Malindi 3°13'S 40°07'E the similar location as the prior record. G. R. Cunningham-van Someren, 1987. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 107(2):91-92.

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. First specimen record for South Australia. A. F. C. Lashmar & G. P. Jackson, 1985. *South Australian Ornithologist* 29:224.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*. Second record for New Zealand, third for Australasia, found on 25 January 1985 at Waikanae Beach, Wellington. A. J. D. Tennyson, 1986. *Notornis* 33:59-61.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*. One or two individuals on 12 April 1985 off Ushant and a single on 11 June 1985 are the first records for Brittany (but 9th and 10th for France) and follow records of an individual noted by its call on Skomer Island from 1981-83 reported here last year in *Sea Swallow* 36:63. *Ar Vran* 1986. III (1):10.

Elliot's Storm-petrel *Oceanites gracilis*. First ever recorded nest for this species found on the small islet of Chungungo, Coquimbo, Chile. R. P. Schlatter & M. A. Marin, 1983. *Gerfaut* 73:197-199.

British Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*. First breeding record from Greece and eastward extension of the range for this storm-petrel. In 1984 eggs and remains of a few birds were found on Prassoudha, off Kymi on the Aegean Sea. G. Handrinos, 1986. *Hellenic Ornithological Soc. Newsletter* No. 3:7-8.

Tristram's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma tristrami*. A single bird captured in January 1983 is the second reported at Honshu, Japan record on the Sea of Japan side of Japan. T. Kazama, 1983. *Tori* 32:31.

Red-billed Tropic bird *Phaethon aethereus*. A new bird for the South African list photographed at Hout Bay, Cape Province. R. K. Schmidt, 1986. *Ostrich* 57:244.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*. Although a regular but non-breeding visitor to the west coast of Africa this species is lesser known on the east coast of Africa. A summer plumage adult on 2 January 1984 at Malindi is a new species for Kenya and East Africa. J. Mulder, 1985. *Dutch Birding* 7:138-9.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*. A first winter bird at Toulan and Roffiat, Brittany in March 1985 is only the fifth French record since 1900, compared with average of three per annum over the last ten years in Great Britain. Presumably this reflects a more northerly distribution of these vagrants, or a more observant population of birdwatchers. *Ar Vran*, 1986. III (1):58.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*. A first winter individual at Brest port from 29 December to January 1985 is a first record for Brittany. J-C. Linard and L. Ggager, 1986. *Ar Vran* XII (2) 124-128.

Black Tern *Chlidonias nigra*. A single bird on the Blue Nile near Khartoum on 24 February 1983 is a first record for Sudan. F. R. Lambert, 1987. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 107(1)17-19.

Black Noddy *Anous minutus*. A single bird in company with foraging Black Terns at Banc D'Arguin, Mauritania (19°50'N (16°19'W) is the first record for the western Palearctic. C. J. Hazevoet, 985. *Dutch Birding* 7:25-27.

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*. A single bird north of Port Sudan on 3 March 1983 is a first for the Sudan and for East Africa. F. R. Lambert, 1987. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 107(1)17-19.

SHORT NOTES

GLOBAL '86 BIRD REPORT

By Lieutenant Commander F. J. Aitken, Royal Navy — H.M.S. *Beaver*

GLOBAL '86 was the Task Group deployment under the command of Flag Officer First Flotilla, Rear Admiral R. I. T. Hogg, which left Portsmouth on 14 April for a west-about circumnavigation of the world, returning in December 1986. The following notes were compiled by Lieutenant Commander F. J. Aitken of H.M.S. *Beaver*, who was appointed as Group Birdwatching Officer.

The first leg was past the Azores to Venezuela, and on 18 April about 100 Cory's Shearwaters were seen in the vicinity of the Azores. On 20 April in the Caribbean a single Pomarine Skua was sighted and a frigate-bird (sp. NK) on 28 April. In the port of La Guaira, Venezuela on 29 April about 50 Brown Pelicans were soaring, apparently effortlessly.

Black-browed Albatross.
Photo: C.P.O. C. A. R. Bailey, R.N., H.M.S. *Achilles*
(*Sea Swallow* Photo. Competition 1986)

H.M.S. *Beaver* passed through the Panama Canal on 6 May; crocodiles were sighted by some, but not by the author, and a large number of unidentified eagles and vultures were soaring high over the densely wooded hills. This activity continued all day and probably several hundred individuals were involved. Two adult Brown Boobies were seen hunting flying fish low over the sea surface on 2 May, and a single Brown Booby and a Masked Booby were noted standing motionless on a piece of driftwood in position 06°24′N 83°04′W. Six single Brown Boobies were seen on 8 May.

A Red-billed Tropicbird was sighted in position 06°37′N 91°28′W on 9 May, a juvenile Red-footed Booby, and three more Brown Boobies. Five Sooty Terns were seen in position 21°35′N 110°32′W on 15 May.

The ship sailed from San Diego CA. on 28 May to take part in Exercise RIMPAC, and on 4 June the first albatross was sighted, a Black-footed, in position 31°16′N 124°45′W, and a Blue-footed Booby. Another Black-footed Albatross was flying very low on June. On 8 June, in position 16°41′N 137°44′W, a single swallo appeared several hundred miles from the nearest land; it seemed slightly larger than the British race, and circled the ship for several minutes before flying off. Three more immature Masked Boobies were seen on 11th and 12th, and a Red-tailed Tropicbird on 13th in position 15°39′N 155°33′W.

Leaving Pearl Harbour on 24 June we sighted a White-tailed Tropicbird in position 21°53′N 159°48′W. Four Sooty Terns were seen am on 26th and eight more at 1850 in position 20°57′N 161°27′W, also three Masked Boobies, and three Bulwer's Petrels. On 27 June were seen small numbers of Sooty Terns, two Black-footed Albatrosses, and two Red-tailed Tropicbirds in position 22°28′N 165°33′W.

Dense flocks of seabirds, probably Sooty Terns and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, and estimated to number about one thousand, were seen on 28 June in position 24°20′N 173°25′W; they appeared to be taking material from the sea surface, but the range made it difficult to be certain. Four White-tailed Tropicbirds and a pale morph Wedge-tailed Shearwater were noted on 29 June.

On 2 July a Black-footed Albatross was seen in position 30°N 162°E, and two Providence Petrels on 4 July at 30°37′N 149°02′E, and between the Bonin Is. and SW Japan, Bulwer's and Bonin Petrels were seen. Further Bulwer's Petrels were seen in the East China Sea, and again in the South China Sea. On entering Hong Kong on 18 July several Black Kites were observed picking flotsam from the harbour; they were quite unconcerned about passing ships and continued to provide fascinating birdwatching opportunities throughout our stay.

Virtually no birds were seen in the South China Sea on our way to Singapore. A few unidentified terns accompanied our entry into

Sembawang dockyard on 31 July, where as in Hong Kong the predominant birds were Tree Sparrows.

H.M.S. *Beaver* left Singapore on 20 August heading NE to the vicinity of Pulau Tioman, a travel agent's dream and where "South Pacific" was filmed. This tropical island off the east coast of Malaysia teemed with wildlife; many frigatebirds were seen — Christmas and Lesser both being positively identified — also Swallow and Sooty Tern. Probables were Fish Eagle and Chestnut Bittern, the latter landing on the foremast.

Jakarta offered little opportunity for birding, but things improved as we neared Australia. A very attractive White-tailed Tropicbird was seen at close range on 9 September when 270nm from Bali.

North Australia yielded Bridled, Crested, Sooty and Black-naped Terns, often in large numbers. The Great Barrier Reef was outstanding with numerous Masked Boobies, Lesser Crested Terns, Brown Boobies, Brown Noddies, Australian Pelicans and a Providence Petrel.

Turning past Brisbane towards the cooler waters off New South Wales, the birdlife altered, the tropical species being replaced by the southern ocean wanderers. The first Cape Pigeon was sighted at 30°S. In this general area two species of albatross were sighted — Wandering and Black-browed, also Great-winged Petrel, Australian Gannet, large numbers of Sooty Shearwaters, Broad-billed Prions and possible Providence Petrels.

In the area of the Bass Strait between Tasmania and mainland Australia, there was an unforgettable sight of an estimated half million Sooty or Short-tailed Shearwaters feeding on the surface, then taking off in vast flocks turning the sky quite black. Also in that area were prions, Crested Terns, Silver Gulls, Black-browed Albatrosses and Kelp Gulls. Approaching the SW corner of Australia I saw a further change in species including Flesh-footed Shearwater, Yellow-nosed Albatross, White-faced Storm Petrel and Grey-headed Albatross.

A disappointing period followed with no sightings across the Indian Ocean until 15°N when a single Red-billed Tropicbird was seen. At anchor off Ras al Hadd, Oman, on 19 November, Ospreys, Herring Gulls and Great Black-headed Gulls were sighted. Further Great Black-headed Gulls and Masked Boobies were later seen at sea off Oman.

Three probable Little Green Bee-eaters tried repeatedly to land on the forecastle in the Gulf of Aden, and about 20 Swallows were sighted flying west to east in small groups. The Red Sea was quiet, with only a single Sooty Gull recorded. Whilst at anchor in the Great Bitter Lake, Suez Canal, both Great Black-headed and Black-headed Gulls were seen on 5 December.

Nothing of note was seen on the final leg home through the Mediterranean and Gibraltar.

RACING PIGEON RECOVERIES

By Captain M. L. M. Coombs, Meteorological Office

With the advent of so many reports recently of racing pigeons landing on board vessels of our Voluntary Weather Observing Fleet, and the general curiosity as to their release point and destination, to say nothing of their ultimate fate, we were prompted to delve into the matter and come up with some of the answers.

Major E. C. Camillieri, General Manager of the Royal Racing Pigeon Association, was most helpful in providing a list of United Kingdom and Continental clubs, together with ringing prefixes and addresses.

Armed with this information we were able to send each ship's report plus a questionnaire, to the respective Club Secretary who in turn very kindly forwarded it to the owner.

A few of these forms have been returned with information of interest but also with the unfortunate news that none of the birds concerned have, so far, "come home to roost". The owners were nevertheless very pleased to receive news of their birds, and to learn that they had been well cared for on board.

RESULTS

	Owner/Club	*Ring No./Release details*	*Recovery details*
A.	R. R. Bishop, Portsmouth Royal Pigeon Racing Association.	GB81-N31043. Saintes, E. Coast France. 28.6.86	M.V. *Melampus*. 28.6.86 off Channel Is. Vessel heading south. Bird remained aboard until Port Said.
	Remarks. His 4 other birds released all arrived home.		
B.	Brown Bros, Ballymena Royal Pigeon Racing Association.	GB83K13191, Guernsey. 20.6.86	M.V. *Snow Flower* 8.7.86, at 36°36'N 52°0'W. Passing Dover and headed for Kent. 13.7.86.
	Remarks. This bird must have taken ship to reach mid-Atlantic and thence M.V. *Snow Flower*.		
C.	P. McMarn, Washington. Tyne. North of England Homing Union.	NEHU83HOU308 Peterborough.	Rig *Ali Baba* 57°12'N 00°42'E, 22.8.86. Landed by helo at Aberdeen 23rd.
	Remarks. Very strong SW winds reported at release and arrival rig.		
D.	D. Dewar, Crossgates, Fife Scottish Homing Union.	SU 85F15624 Penrith. 3.5.86.	Rig *Ali Baba* (as C) 57°12'N 00°42'E. 22.8.86. Landed by helo at Aberdeen 23rd.
	Remarks. Three months elapsed before recovery.		
E.	E. Pack, Sunnyside, Tyne. North of England Homing Union.	5300NEHU84. Tours, France, 20.6.86.	M.V. *Fort Hamilton*. Irish Sea. Still aboard at Hamburg 7.7.86. Vessel loading for Bangkok
	Remarks. Major Camillieri writes of a big International Pigeon convention in Bangkok in September, so this bird, and also two others, were maybe not waiting for their owners to send them!		

PARALLEL VARIATION IN THE MARKINGS OF WILSON' S AND LEACH'S STORM-PETRELS

By W. R. P. Bourne

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* normally has dark centres to the central feathers of the rump, which become increasingly marked in the more southerly east Pacific populations until the extreme form *O. l. chapmani*, which breeds on islets off Baja California, has the rump uniformly dark. One bird found in a burrow on St. Kilda in July 1960 also had the white rump reduced to a pale patch on each side of the base of the tail (*Auk* 99:793-797), and I have recently seen a similar individual among hundreds of birds wintering in the tropical Atlantic. During the summer of 1983 an entirely dark fork-tailed storm-petrel identified as Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *O. monorhis* from Asian waters (although the description seems indistinguishable from that of dark *O. leuco rhoa* from the east Pacific) was also found visiting the Salvages between the Canaries and Madeira (P. C. James & H. A. Robertson, *Ardea* 73:105-106).

Wilson-s Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* usually differs from the previous species in the possession of a pure white rump with dark tips to the longest feathers and yellow centres to the webs between the toes. Previously the main variation reported has been the occurrence of three paler birds with heavily streaked white breasts taken off New Zealand in the last century (R. C. Murphy & J. P. Snyder, *Amer. Mus. Novit.* 1596:1-16) which may belong to an extinct population. A partially melanistic bird with the dimensions of Wilson's Storm-petrel (wing 140mm, tail 70mm, culmen 13.5mm, tarsus 37mm, middle toe 30mm, weight 35g) which came to the ship's lights in San Carlos Water in the Falklands on the evening of 18 March 1986 closely resembled Leach's Storm-petrel in its appearance, but with black feet lacking pale webs and a grey centre to the rump owing to the presence of dark tips to all the feathers; a white patch was still present on each side of the base of the tail.

It therefore seems wise to exercise some caution in separating these birds entirely by their markings, though their silhouette and manner of flight should remain distinctive.

Dr W. R. P Bourne, Department of Zoology, The University, Aberdeen, AB9 2TN.

LONG-EARED OWLS IN THE NORTH SEA — NOVEMBER 1983

By Captain P. W. G. Chilman, M.N.

During the night of 3 November 1983 M.V. *Donovania* was anchored about 10 miles offshore at the Hook of Holland, waiting to berth at Europoort. We weighed anchor at about 0600 and proceeded inward in mist. Whilst doing so many birds in flight were seen in the floodlights, mainly Starlings but also some thrushes. The Second Officer had left me a note to say that he had seen during the night at least one big bird, probably an owl.

After berthing, the Chief Officer told me that the deck was littered with dead birds. I found numerous parts of at least 12 Starlings, about 10 Redwings, one Blackbird, one Song Thrush, one male Goldcrest, and one unidentified finch. The Starlings did not appear to be such popular food as only a small amount of flesh had been eaten from each. All the bodies of the other species were almost completely consumed except for the heads, wings and legs. The only part of the Goldcrest I found was the head which had been cleanly snipped off as had two of the Redwings. The finch had been completely stripped of flesh, and some of the Redwings even had the skulls picked clean. There was a large amount of black tarry droppings.

While in Europoort I did not see any sign of the bird, or birds, responsible, but when we sailed for Denmark still in mist, and soon after daylight at 0500 on 5 November, a Long-eared Owl appeared from amongst the pipes on deck. On searching closely round the deck, I discovered that there were indeed four on board. I cannot say positively whether these owls were responsible for the slaughter on the 3rd, but since the visibility had varied from mist to dense fog throughout the entire period it seems probable that they could well have remained on board rather than flying off. I therefore believe that the massacre was almost certainly the work of one or more Long-eared Owls.

At least one owl was still aboard that afternoon at 1630 when the ship was well up the Danish coast.

SOME BIRDWATCHING IMPRESSIONS FROM TURKEY

By Walter Weitkowitz

From an ornithological point of view Turkey is always an interesting country in which to travel. A large number of migrants from Europe and the Asiatic part of the Soviet Union overwinter, or fly through on their way south. Many species, unknown in most European countries, breed in Turkey.

I spent two holidays in Turkey. The first in June 1985 was in Kurdistan in the eastern part of the country. The second holiday was taken in April 1986 in the south-western part of the country. Our camp site was at Lake Bafa in the Club Natura. In addition my ship, the M/S *Kalymnos* of the German Nahost line, called at many Turkish ports between the months of September and December 1986. The most important of these for us was the port of Izmir, where we put in three times. We visited Iskenderun twice, but only called at Mersin on one occasion.

Izmir is an important city commercially, with industries and docks, and is a large tourist centre. The atmosphere here is very friendly. The Gulf of Izmir, through which we had to pass when entering and leaving the port, is from an ornithological point of view one of the most important places of observation in the eastern Mediterranean. According to the season the following species of seabirds can be seen: Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Mediterranean Black-headed Gull *L. melanocephalus*, Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*, Audouin's Gull *L. audouinii*, Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis*, Cory's Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus yelkouan*. I did not see Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, White-winged Black Tern *C. leucoperus*, or Slender-billed Gull *L. genei*, but these species probably occur on migration.

The most important areas for observation lie south of Izmir. These include the following: Lake Bafa, the delta area of Buyuk Menderes, around Kusadasi, Aggol (west of Akkoy), Latmos mountains (east of Lake Bafa), Machie near Didim (for small birds) and Milet. Many small birds can be observed in the area around Ephesus where I recorded nearly 200 species. A great number of White Storks *Ciconia alba* breed in the town of Selcuk and near Milet. It is suspected that several Audouin's Gulls breed in the area around Gulluk a few kilometres away from the seaside town resort of Guvercinlik. In April 1986 I saw many adult and young birds there.

The whole area also offers enormous scope for archaeological tours, which can always be combined with ornithological study. The most interesting places are Ephesus, Priene, Didem, Bodrum, Euromos, Milas, Herkleia, La Branda (scenically interesting), Milet and Jasos. One should not forget to visit the Milli-Davutlar National Park, primarily of botanical interest. This park lies in the Samsun-Dagi mountains east of Soke and is well known for its many orchids. It must be pointed out that the countryside in Turkey is in a very fragile state. Pursuing commercial development, large scale drainage schemes are being implemented in many parts of Turkey, particularly in the south-west.

In the areas referred to above there is strong evidence of hunting. In Turkey hunting also takes place during the so-called close season. There are few, or possibly no, real controls on this

activity. Birds at nesting sites are also hunted and so many breeding birds are destroyed. Ducks, in particular, are coming under increasing attack and the number of breeding ducks in Turkey is steadily declining. In contrast in the east, in large areas the indigenous Kurd population are not allowed to carry arms for political reasons, so there are not many hunters to be seen. The birds' chances of survival there are therefore considerably better.

The port of Iskenderun lies on Turkey's south-eastern coast. I noted little of particular ornithological interest either in the docklands or at anchor, except a single adult Audouin's Gull flying past on 25 October 1986. Iskenderun is a naval port; foreign seamen are only allowed shore leave in the town and it is forbidden to visit the surrounding country. In most cases the shore passes are only brought aboard just before the ship sails, the ship having lain there for several days and the atmosphere of the administrative bureaucracy is an unfriendly one.

At anchor off Mersin on 26 October 1986 there were Audouin's Gulls, appearing in small groups. It is probable that this species occurs here more frequently than generally assumed.

There is much of ornithological and archaeological interest in Turkey, and I can very much recommend this country for a holiday.

Walter Weitkowitz, Rehkoffstrasse 1, 2000 Hamburg 11

CASPIAN TERNS PREDATING OTHER SEABIRDS AND STEALING FISH FROM MAN

By Bernard King

The Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*, the largest of its *genus*, feeds by conventional plunge-diving, but in certain places and/or certain individuals kleptoparasitism has developed. According to David A. Bannerman, *The Birds of the British Isles* (1963):132 (Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh), they may act like skuas to induce other seabirds to disgorge food by pursuit. Also G. A. Henry, *The Guide to the Birds of Ceylon* (1971 ed):332 (Oxford University Press, London) observed a Caspian Tern mobbing a Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* which had robbed it of its fish. Furthermore, I. J. Ferguson-Lees, *British Birds* (1971) 64:316 states in his studies of Caspian Terns that they will rob other terns and gulls in flight. Additionally, these terns were thought to take eggs and young of other birds, but first-hand records seem few.

My experiences of Caspian Terns derive from many winter visits to the Atlantic coast of Florida, USA, since 1971. Here they "mix-in" among Ring-billed Gulls *L. delawarensis* and Laughing Gulls *L. atricilla* and other species, and I have watched them trying with little success to compete with their companions when food is thrown to them. No doubt they do occasionally obtain food in this way.

However, an event which particularly interested me occurred on 4 January 1984 when I was visiting the fishermen's pier, just north of Cocoa Beach, Brevard County, Florida. This is a much favoured place for angling and sometimes in their keenness to fish, bait and fresh fish were temporarily left on the wood decking of the pier. This structure juts some four kilometres into the sea, and I watched two bold Caspian Terns stealing bait and picking at some fresh fish only a short distance from the fishermen. I was informed later by one of them that this was a common habit practised by these birds in winter. Caspian Terns, though present in large numbers in Florida outside the breeding season, are outnumbered at this time by Royal Terns *S. maxima*. Having watched both species for long periods, I have yet to see Royal Terns behave in this manner.

Editor's note. Dr E. K. Dunn of the Seabird Group has commented on this interesting note, and for completeness we publish his remarks below. If any member has similar observations of terns scavenging or practising kleptoparasitism we would welcome details.

"If, as I suspect, kleptoparasitism is rather a fringe activity, perhaps confined to specialists in the colony, the behaviour of a similar kind is known in some other terns. Roseate Terns steal fish from other terns on the Farnes, Coquet Island, also Australia (Dunn, E. K. 1973 *Auk 90*: 641-51, also in *Birds of the Western Palearctic Vol. 4* (BWP4)), and Arctic Terns have been recorded stealing fish from Slavonian Grebes and "Tysties" in Iceland (BWP4). Royal Terns sometimes kleptoparasitise intraspecifically, as do Common Terns, especially in times of food shortage.

There are several well-documented cases of scavenging (from ground or water surface) in various terns. Scavenging was particularly prevalent in tropical West Africa on my winter visits there; terns up to Royal size picking up offal behind fishing boats — Caspians were scarce in the areas I observed. I suspect that terns are filling the vacant gull niche in the tropics. Elsewhere, Crested, Sandwich, Arctic, Common, and Roseate (see Watson, P. S. 1981, *British Birds* 74:82-90) have also been recorded scavenging behind ships. In West Africa, terns also scavenge fish from beaches (mostly Sandwich, Common and Black) which facilitates the success of baited snares laid by children. In BWP4 I give an example of Caspians scavenging fish from nets.

My overall conclusion is that most tern spp. are more opportunist and flexible in their feeding behaviour than is sometimes supposed. Bernard's observations bear out this opportunism rather nicely, but also convey an impression that Caspians are somewhat exceptional in this respect, notably in scavenging. The literature and my own observations, however, show this is really quite a widespread phenomenon."

BERNARD KING — OBITUARY

It is sad to report the death of Bernard King on 26 March 1987. Bernard, a life member, joined the Society, as an Admiralty Civil Servant, in 1947 and had been a regular contributor to *Sea Swallow* in recent years. In ornithological circles his outstanding and prolific contribution of notes to *British Birds* and other journals, based on his field observations, will ensure that his expertise as a highly competent observer is long remembered. In this respect he was one of the old school, watching and recording, and always seeking to make a useful addition to scientific knowledge.

Amongst other activities Bernard co-ordinated the national wildfowl counts for the North Somerset reservoirs. This was at a time when the largest man-made stretch of water, and now ornithologically famous, Chew Valley Lake was becoming established as a unique place for wintering wildfowl and migrants. He was also a prominent member of the Bristol Naturalists' Society and the Somerset Ornithological Society. In 1967 he was elected an honorary life member of the Bristol Ornithological Club in recognition of his distinguished services to local ornithology.

Bernard did a great deal to encourage newcomers in his passion for birdwatching, particularly youngsters, by leading outings and field meetings to exciting but frequently cold and windswept places, and freely giving praise to even the most amateurish attempts of the novice in identification. For me he started a life-long interest, and leaves many indelible recollections but one in particular may serve to illustrate. On a late winter's afternoon, in a still air and failing light, we were stalking a flock of newly arrived grey geese. The whistling calls of the Widgeon and the alarm of an occasional Snipe taking wing broke the silence as we trudged over the pasture. By systematically examining the flock of grazing geese, Bernard pointed out the darker Greenland race of the White-fronted Goose and discovered a rare Bean Goose, distinguished by bill colour and shape.

There were many, many other memorable occasions, which we enjoyed together at, for example, Portland Bill, Steart Point, and Woody Bay, searching, duck counting, watching the sea, examining old quarries, or cliff tops. Seabirds were also one of Bernard's interests, with trips from Weston-super-Mare to Lundy Island on M.V. *Balmoral* being organised in search of Storm-petrels and Manx Shearwaters.

Our sincere sympathies go to his wife, Marjorie, and daughter.

S. E. Chapman.

OBITUARY : STANLEY CRAMP

Stanley Cramp, who died of a stroke on 19 August aged 72, was originally a midlander who first began to attract attention in the 1950s as a member of the London Natural History Society and the joint RSPB/BTO/Game Research Association committee which first revealed the impact of pesticides upon British birds. He was such an effective administrator that soon no committee was considered complete without him, and he performed a particularly useful service in co-operation with an old friend, Peter Conder, when as reforming Chairman and Director respectively they dragged the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, kicking and screaming into the first half of the twentieth century.

At this time we were also suddenly confronted with an unexpected vacancy on the committe of the original Seabird Group when the first Chairman, George Dunnet, left for a sabbatical year in New Zealand while we were in the process of organising the first national census of breeding seabirds, Operation Seafarer, so Stanley was asked to fill the gap. He agreed on condition that we would hold the committee meetings in his flat to save him inconvenience, and never ask him to do any work. Yet within a short time he had also taken over the chair of the committee organising the survey when the original chairman, James Fisher, was tragically killed in a road accident, and begun arranging for the publication of the results, which would never have appeared so soon without him.

He was in a good position to help here, since by that time he had also retired early from the civil service to edit the massive *Handbook to the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa* (known familiarly as the *Birds of the Western Palearctic*, or BWP for brevity). Over the last fifteen years he has progressively worked (and smoked) himself into the ground for it, so that it is now nearly complete, with the three volumes covering seabirds (and incidentally summarising the relevant RNBWS observations, usually ignored in such works) already published. While most (with the notable exception of the behaviour sections organised by K. E. L. Simmons) is frankly neither original nor critical, it provides a comprehensive summary of the exploding literature which will be of permanent value.

Stanley himself was an urbane, dry and precise individual who, while as strict with everybody else as he was with himself, was also invariably pleasant and equable to deal with, and it had been a growing source of sadness to his many friends to see how he had worn himself out in the cause of the great work which will remain as his permanent monument.

W. R. P. Bourne

BOOK REVIEWS

Harrison, P. 1987. SEABIRDS OF THE WORLD: A PHOTOGRAPHIC GUIDE. Pp. 317. Christopher Helm Publishers Limited, Bromley. Price £15.95.

A new standard for field guides was set by Peter Harrison in the production of his first book, *Seabirds: an identification guide* which was widely acclaimed a masterpiece. The same will be true for his latest work, *Seabirds of the world: a photographic guide*. It meets well the claim to be the finest and most comprehensive collection ever of seabird photographs.

This is a truly pocket-sized book in soft covers and is a collection of 741 full colour photographs of nearly all the world's seabirds, portrayed where possible in such a way as to best aid identification. Thus about 90% of oceanic birds are shown in flight over the open sea. On average there are two photos of each species but those species which exhibit significant plumage difference in age and season, for example frigate-birds, skuas and gulls, receive four photos. Of course this is not enough, but the limitation is a practical one. Recognising this, a separate section at the end is devoted to identification keys of the albatrosses, shearwaters and petrels. Where photos are not available, seagoing photographers please take note for possible future editions, for example Mascarene Petrel, Heinroth's Shearwater, Trudeau's Tern and Chinese Crested Tern, the birds are illustrated by Peter's own paintings, often indistinguishable from a photograph. The illustrations are supported by a brief text covering identification, similar species, habitat and distribution.

One can always criticise ambitious projects such as this one: errors are at a minimum and it is encouraging to see that the distribution maps from the earlier volume (first edition) have been corrected and updated, although they are now reproduced in such a size as to make them not easily legible. An unfortunate and misleading mistake occurs in the caption of the Great Black-backed Gull (page 116) for what is clearly a Lesser Black-backed Gull, as evidenced by the relatively smaller less deep bill, and in the review copy much paler colour of the secondaries and coverts in comparison and contrast with the black primaries. Other mis-captions are unlikely to mislead the average observer at the species level.

This book is a must for the luggage of every seafarer. Don't pack your bags without it!

S. E. Chapman.

SEABIRDS IN THE MED

Medmaravis & Monbailliu, X. 1986. *Mediterranean marine avifauna — population studies and conservation.* NATO Advanced Science Institutes Series G: Ecological Sciences Vol. 12, and Springer-Verlag, Berlin Heidelberg, p. 535, ISBN 3-540-16092-2.

The Mediterranean has long been one of the more neglected fields for the study of seabirds, but as is usual with vacuums it is now being filled with a rush. This handsome volume contains the proceedings of a NATO Advanced Workshop on the population dynamics and conservation of the Mediterranean Marine Avifauna Association organised at Alghero, Sardinia on 26-30 March 1986 by the recently-formed international Mediterranean Marine Bird Association (MEDMARAVIS: address, 20 rue St-Martin 75004 Paris). It includes some 35 contributions mainly devoted to the distribution of seabirds in the area, with much new data, and also some accounts of their conservation problems. It reviews comparable observations elsewhere, and the first record of the breeding of the rehabilitated local race of British Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus melitensis* in Greece. In some cases the authors still seem unaware of some other both old and new observations (including the long series by the RNBWS in this area), but in general the standard is already remarkably high and doubtless they will learn.

THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Strange, I. J. 1987. *The Falkland Islands and their natural history.* David & Charles, Newton Abbot & London, p. 160, ISBN 7153 8833 9. £12.95.

Ian Strange has lived in the Falklands as a freelance naturalist for some 25 years, during which time he has acquired part of one of the better bird-islands, carried out original studies on several of the more prominent birds and animals, and written innumerable papers and several books about the wildlife and the need for conservation. His *Falkland Islands* (now in its fourth edition with the same publisher) is already possibly the best local history, but provided little scope for illustration. He has now produced an extraordinarily handsome combination of coloured or black-and-white photographs, and quotations from earlier naturalists as a supplement. The result conveys a most vivid impression of the local scene, even if it unfortunately lacks much documentation; this is due to be provided shortly in a third photographically illustrated book about the birds by Robin Woods.

W. R. P. Bourne

TAIL PIECE

"The Birds"

HMS *Protector* — South Orkneys — 1963

It was as we were approaching the British Antarctic Survey Base at Signy Island, our helicopter heavily loaded with mail, stores and survey gear, that we realised the wind had dropped, and it needed no recourse to the morning's careful weight calculations to tell us that attempting a landing at the base would be unwise. There seemed to be no other landing places; the terrain was precipitous and icy, with penguins occupying any spot that looked hopeful, save one high mossy knoll that offered a flattish area the size of a tennis court with a safe overshoot. It was on to this deceptively welcoming sward that I was bundled, together with survival gear, and the helicopter climbed away, lighter by some 200 pounds, and now able to carry on with the programme for the day.

Great Skuas in the dive
Photo: Lieutenant D. S. Dobson, R.N., 1963

I scarcely had time to admire the view before I became aware of a dark menacing shape approaching, and ducked instinctively as a huge brown bird "whooshed" overhead with a shriek and a light flick to my flying helmet. A second bird followed and I realised to my dismay that I was right in the middle of a Great Skua breeding colony, with no chance to escape until the helicopter returned. I recalled that a fishing-rod was essential equipment for this sort of experience, or at least a gun or walking stick held high as a target, but I had none of these and the birds instead concentrated on my head, and my camera also, as I held it high to take an action shot.

My stay there lasted over five hours. You would have thought that after that time the birds would have come to accept my presence, but no, the attacks kept coming in right to the end. You might also have felt that this mortal, sound in wind and limb, might by then have relaxed a little, concentrating less on self-preservation and more on the benefits of the situation; time for scribbling a note home; perhaps an hour or two sketching; even an attempt at a poem. Somehow it wasn't like that, and even though I knew the birds couldn't really do me much harm I found the whole episode rather harrowing. I was certainly greatly relieved not to have to spend the night there, and very grateful when the helicopter picked me up that evening to get me back aboard for dinner.

That night was a rare treat — wardroom cinema and no night watch on the bridge — and I settled in my seat in pleasant anticipation. The film? It was Alfred Hitchcock's chilling thriller "The Birds", and like a mug I stuck it out to the end; and thus thoroughly deserved the nightmares that followed, and totally ruined my precious "all night in".

Captain D. S Dobson, Royal Navy.

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INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*. Authors do not need to be R.N.B.W.S. members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing and submitted in duplicate. Figures and diagrams should be prepared in the size of final production.

The style used in *Sea Swallow* should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references as in *British Birds*.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition, must reach the Editor by **31st March.**